

News, Trends and Comments

News

Gateways

This felicitous metaphor has begun to crop up often in discussions concerning online information services - and in fact now clearly reflects a significant trend in the area, perhaps the major trend for this and the coming year or two. The idea, of course, is that the searcher logging into a data-base host system can be switched through to another host computer in order to gain access to a file (or files) not loaded on the former; for all administrative formalities (contracts, billing etc.), the user's contact is only with the system on to which he originally logs in. Indeed he may not even be aware that his search is running on another host's computer. Such facilities are not entirely new, and we have called attention to them in previous issues: December 1983, p. 343-345, June 1984, p. 195, etc. (CAS Online to FIZ Karlsruhe and vice versa, via "STN International"); December 1984, p. 428-429 (the planned EHOOG transparent network of European hosts); December 1984, p. 443 (DIALOG to Dun & Bradstreet, for Official Airline Guides); February 1985, p. 63 (ESA-IRS to Finsbury); June 1985, p. 184 (NewsNet to Vu/Text, for Vu/Quote). These arrangements are of course all subsequent to the BLAISE-Link service, by which the British Library allows UK users to search files on the US National Library of Medicine computer. Also, ESA-IRS has long been offering certain of its files (e.g. INIS, AGRIS) through gateway-type facilities.

At the moment, gateway agreements are coming very much into fashion (and further announcements will surely be forthcoming). One of the more - on the face of it - peculiar developments is that CompuServe users can now hook into CAS Online (and presumably thereby into the entire STN system) though the switching in this case specifically requires a short keyboard routine. CompuServe claims to have 225,000 customers. Another NewsNet gateway is soon to come into effect, with Comtex's TextLink - allowing NewsNet customers to search the Electronic Registrar and the Commerce Business Daily Online. On the cards in Europe is gateway access to the World Reporter service, on the UK host Datasolve, for customers of ESA-IRS.

RACE

In our previous issue (p. 192-193) we commented on the proposed European Community program called "R&D in Advanced Communication Technologies for Europe" (RACE). We can now report that the Council of Ministers has given, on 25 July, its approval to the implementation of the RACE "definition phase", which will run until the end of 1986. The idea

is, in the words of the Council Decision, "to define precise objectives and to develop the approach to technological cooperation at Community level". Responsibility for coordinating the definition phase lies with the European Commission, under guidance by a 24-member ad hoc committee (two members from each country in the Community). This phase comprises two parts - I: development of a reference model for integrated broadband communication (IBC) networks; II: technology evaluation and exploration of specific options.

Data base and system training

With effect from October of this year, ESA-IRS is offering to "all bona fide educational establishments" a discount on the use of its training files - i.e., unlimited usage against an annual payment of 1,000 accounting units per password. By that time, there should be six training files available: ABI/Inform, CAB, Chemical Abstracts, EDIN, INSPEC and Pascal.

Intellectual property?

Last month the US Library of Congress announced that it had begun attaching to "tape distributions containing [cataloguing] records created by LC" a statement of copyright valid with respect to dissemination outside the USA. The LC is preparing a system for licensing - for a fee - US organizations which wish to distribute these "MARC" records to foreign parties on a selective basis. Licenses are to be required as of 1 October. "Wholesale" distribution abroad will remain largely the prerogative of the LC itself. The Information Industry Association has alerted its members to this development, and may undertake some action on their behalf. The LC has been producing MARC tapes since 1968.

One down

In the US District Court for the District of Colorado, Storage Technology Corporation and its affiliated companies have filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Financial information

Dow Jones & Co. and Oklahoma Publishing Co. are to acquire a joint controlling interest in Telerate inc., from Exco International p.l.c., for approximately US\$460 million. Dow Jones is purchasing 32% of the Telerate shares, and Oklahoma Publishing (owner of the full-text news service Datatek), 20%. Telerate's profitability has been outstanding recently, and its 1983-84 turnover was US\$114 million. It has more than 24,000 terminals connected.

Of course the market for online financial information provision in general has seen exceptionally strong growth over recent years. This will have been a significant element in the just-announced 1985 first-half figures for Reuters Holdings p.l.c.: £212.8 million revenue (up 42% over a year earlier), £43.2 million pre-tax profit (up 43.5%), £0.06 earnings per share (up 33%). Quotron - whose market share is less

than Reuters' but more than Telerate's - has also been doing alright, on a 1984 revenue increase of over 20%. Its terminal count (at more than 70,000) is the highest of all, and it has just agreed to a joint venture with AT&T, winning Shearson Lehman Brothers as its first client.

According to The Wall Street Journal (which is published by Dow Jones), Oklahoma Publishing has agreed to allow Dow Jones first right of refusal in the event that it decides to sell off its 20% Telerate interest. Together with Associated Press, Dow Jones already had a financial stake in overseas exploitation of Telerate services.

Standards online

Under a recently signed agreement between the British Standards Institution and Pergamon-InfoLine, the latter will be mounting a UK standards data base later this year. The file is to contain around 10,000 records initially.

Data bases (selective brief notices)

Now available on Télé systèmes-Questel are BODACC (equivalent to the hard copy Bulletin officiel des annonces civiles et commerciales; information on French companies; coverage from February 1985; daily updates) and Agora (full-text dispatches from the Agence France Presse).

Ageline (file label AARP; a bibliographic file from the American Association of Retired Persons) and Sport (file label SFDB; a bibliographic file from the Sport Information Resource Centre in Ottawa, Canada; coverage from 1949 onwards; updated monthly) are new on **BRS**. NTIS has been reloaded. BRS has just implemented an optional menu-driven search procedure on its main ("BRS/Search") service - minus a few of the features available on the command-driven version.

ESA-IRS is now offering INSPEC's Electronic Materials Information Service (EMIS - see ISU vol. 5 no. 2, p. 121-126; to be updated monthly) as file 105. Further new data bases are International Pharmaceutical Abstracts (file 102; coverage from 1970 onwards; updated monthly) and the Aerospace Glossary (file 57; bilingual French/English). This host has also now added (unsearchable) abstracts to its version of BIOSIS (file 7); and reloaded NASA (file 1) as well as Pascal (file 14) with numerous improvements.

Recently brought online by **DIALOG** are: the Aerospace Database (file 108, bibliographic, coverage from 1984 onwards, updated twice per month, restricted access - USA only), Database of Databases (file 230, produced by M.E. Williams, to be reloaded quarterly), Biobusiness (file 285 - see ISU vol. 5 no. 3, p. 181-182, 183 - coverage from January 1985 onwards, monthly updates) and Compare Products (file 539, produced by Data Courier, listing computer and computer-related products and services with descriptions based on published display advertising, coverage from December 1983 onwards, monthly reloads). Recently reloaded by this vendor are: Compendex (file 8), ISMEC (file 14), Chemical Industry Notes (file 19), Trademarkscan (file 226), and the Electronic Yellow Pages directories (files 501-510).

Can/OLE has loaded the bibliographic data base Boreal (produced by

the Boreal Institute for Northern Studies, coverage from 1977 onwards, monthly updates).

Now under development is **ERIC** Digests Online, described by its producer as "a full-text data base of short topical reports on education". Availability is to be through The Source (Ed-Line), with menu- as well as command-language-interface.

Information Access Company is developing a videodisc-based LegalTrac service to complement its previously announced InfoTrac service (ISU vol. 5 no. 1, p. 67). Updating is to be monthly.

Data bases withdrawn

BI/Data Forecasts	DIALOG
BI/Data Time Series	DIALOG
Commons Hansard	Scicon

Quid pro quo

In view of the fact that Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway, the UK, France and The Netherlands are now operating programs for contribution of material to the DOE Energy data base, the US Department of Energy will allow users in these countries to search the data base online via DIALOG (as well as via INKA).

More reps lined up

The online information retrieval service Pergamon-InfoLine in the UK has arranged for agents to represent it in Singapore/Malaysia/Thailand/Brunei/The Philippines (GTDC (Informatics) Private ltd. in Singapore), and in Australia/New Zealand (Saztec Information Retrieval Services in New South Wales).

News from INTUG

Recent items from the very readable bulletin of INTUG (the International Telecommunications Users Group):

- Quote from Ernst Weiss, INTUG's president: "... users are (now) fully accepted as essentially interested parties in the development of international telecommunications policies. With the ITU Secretary-General and his staff we have an excellent relationship; at the CCITT meetings and study groups INTUG delegates are accepted and fully involved; at OECD meetings INTUG views are invited and our suggestions followed up." INTUG feels that it realized important results in the following areas: international telecommunications policy developments, development of user positions on key issues, cooperation with CCITT, its "watch-dog" role, and its own organizational development.

- Another quote from Ernst Weiss: "We have reasons to believe - and it is more than pure rumour - that the European administrations are getting their act together to press in a concerted and well-coordinated way for the worldwide introduction of volume-based tariffs for national and international private leased circuits."

The bulletin contains a wealth of information on international telecoms developments and news in this area from many countries worldwide. It is available to non-members for an annual Sfr. 100 from Mr. Peter Smith, Reuters ltd., 85 Fleet Street, London EC4P 4AJ, UK.

Extension

The European Biotechnology Information Project (EBIP - see ISU vol. 4 no. 3, p. 196) has received renewed funding from the European Commission, insuring its continuation through May 1986. The Science Reference Library in London is housing the EBIP office.

Tools of the trade

The **Medline** List of Serials Indexed for Online Users 1985 is available from NTIS (PB 85-143220) at US\$10 USA & Canada / \$20 elsewhere (or in microfiche at \$4.50/\$9.00).

There is a new edition of the **INSPEC** List of Journals and Other Serial Sources, at £10 UK / £12 elsewhere. Details from the producer (INSPEC, Marketing Department, Station House, Nightingale Road, Hitchin, Herts. SG5 1RJ, UK; tel. (0462) 53331).

Also from INSPEC: Cumulative Indexes to the INSPEC Abstracts Journals 1981-1984, in nineteen volumes (price not stated).

Chemical Abstracts Service is now offering the new two-volume edition of the **CA** Index Guide (US\$50.00/£37.50/¥20,000), as well as the updated manuals: Using **CAS Online**: The CA File (US\$15.00/£11.10/¥3,900), and Using **CAS Online**: The Registry File (US\$40.00/£29.60/¥10,200).

Available from **Predicasts** is the PTS Company Directory 1985 at US\$50 (North America) / US\$60 (elsewhere).

Derwent Publications has produced a new version of the **World Patents Index** Online User Manual (Derwent Instruction Manual 1C). Price: £7/US\$14/¥3,000 (including eventual updates) to Derwent "standard-rate" customers; free (and sent automatically) to "preferential-rate" customers. Orders: to your regional Derwent Office.

Of probable interest to ISU readers is Gale Research Company's new revised and enlarged second edition of its Telecommunications Systems & Services Directory, at US\$240.

Information retrieval software

UNESCO is developing a microcomputer version of the package CDS/ISIS (written in Pascal, for IBM PCs and compatibles, menu-driven, hard disk required). It is to be available this autumn.

Acid rain

It is reported that EIC/Intelligence has developed an information service (abstracts bulletin with annual index and full texts in microfiche) on this topic.

Unilever-EDS contract

It has been announced that Unilever is negotiating a contract with the American company EDS (a subsidiary of General Motors) for the management and running of Unilever's computer operations in its head offices in Rotterdam and London. The contract would provide for the sale of a substantial machine park of computers and communication facilities with a total staff of 140. Comments in the press indicate that this would be one of the first examples of privatization in industry.

Western Union out, NCR in

OCLC has announced that its terminals (models 100, 105 and 110) and M300 workstation will henceforth be serviced by NCR Customer Services Division, under a contract taking effect on 1 July.

BIOSIS in Europe

VCH Verlagsgesellschaft mbH (formerly Verlag Chemie) is the new representative of BioSciences Information Service in the FRG, GDR, Switzerland and Austria. Address: Pappelallee 3, Postfach 1260/1280, 6940 Weinheim, Bergstrasse, FRG. Telephone: (06201) 6020; telex: 465 516.

People

New Director of Studies at the **European Institute for Information Management** in Luxemburg is Peter Popper, who previously was the director of library and information services at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Laxenburg, Austria. This appointment has led to a (temporary?) change of orientation for EIIM - in that instead of a regular 1985-86 course of study it will be offering a series of seminars on various topics, each lasting from three to five days and each conducted by an outside expert. The first of these, set for 5-7 November, will deal with "the marketing of information". The target group is senior and middle management personnel from the commercial sector. Proposed future seminar topics are telecommunications, legal aspects (including copyright and transborder data flow), and information policy. Institute funding comes from the European Commission (DG V) and from the Luxemburg ministry of education.

As a consequence of its absorption of Carrollton Press REMARC operations and its take-over of Data Phase's ALIS III library-automation system, **UTLAS** inc. has made a number of recent appointments in its US subsidiary UTLAS Corporation, among which: Susan Severtson as vice president, marketing; and Richard Newman as vice president, operations. Regional marketing representative for the east coast is to be Norville Webb; for the central USA, Lee Haniford. The head of UTLAS Corporation is now Harriet Velazquez.

Debra K. Brown is taking over the position of head of the data base management department at **Engineering Information**. She was previously with the R.R. **Bowker** Company, electronic products group.

Pergamon-InfoLine's new "représentante pour la France", to be based

in London, is Sarah Dunlop, formerly of ECHO (the European Commission information retrieval service). Pergamon-InfoLine has greatly increased its penetration of the French market lately (against considerable - subsidized - domestic competition).

The **Special Libraries Association** has promoted Richard Battaglia to assistant executive director.

The recently appointed head of reader services at the **Science Reference Library (British Library)** is Ron Baker, who has been with the SRL since 1967.

Succeeding Fred Croxton as director of the Automated Systems Office, **Library of Congress**, is Herbert S. Becker. He comes to LC from the US Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency.

Robert S. Willard, previously vice president for government relations at the **Information Industry Association**, has become manager, government markets, at **Mead Data Central**.

William E. Thomson is now chief operating officer for **I.P. Sharp**.

New coordinator of producer services at **BRS** is Frank Zirpolo.

William Crossman has taken over at the communications and information services group of **ITT Corporation**, succeeding Robert Braverman.

Telecommunications deal

Philips Telecommunication and Data Systems Division (The Netherlands) has reached an agreement with the US company Harris whereby the latter will undertake North American sales and support for Philips' Sopho-net packet-switched network system.

Visual display terminals

The Computer and Business Equipment Manufacturers' Association (CBEMA) has issued a news release claiming that "a voluntary VDT standard [is] one step closer to reality". The point is that a 72-page draft American national standard, worked out by the Human Factors Society, has now come up for public review. There is a three-month period (till 1 October) for public comment. CBEMA is distributing a "layperson's guide" to the draft standard and suggests that the eventual outcome (a full ANSI standard) "may also influence the development of an international standard on VDTs". Some of the draft standard's requirements and recommendations are quite vague, and others surprisingly precise - but on balance they are to be welcomed now that VDT use has become such a widespread and time-consuming phenomenon in office, research and other environments.

Trends

Voice-data integration

A recent report from Logica predicts that integrated voice-data switching will emerge much more slowly than our expert world has expected. At the end of the eighties only 5-10% of the users will have integrated switching. A number of reasons for their expectations:

- the present cost of integrated switching;
- the lack of multifunctional workstations;
- the lack of wide-area communications worldwide;
- the lack of standards;
- the slowness of users to change their organizational structures.

The prediction is not surprising: at the moment, it is very difficult for larger organizations to choose network technology. Smaller ones for the most part have insufficient means to install rather expensive LANs or integrated PABXs.

Looking back

The time has perhaps indeed come for publicly deliberating where we have been in our technological progress, as well as trying to indicate (guess?) where we are going. One existing example of this kind of tendency is the publication entitled Bulletin de l'Association internationale d'histoire des télécommunications et de l'informatique. Actually, the first issue was dated May 1984, but we doubt that it has yet become widely known. Further information from AIHTI, 27 rue Charlot, 75003 Paris, France.

Comments

Computer hacking

A very popular item with the public-at-large and in the press is computer hacking. We read a recent item about the trial of seven teenagers from New Jersey who used their home computers to get President Reagan's hotline telephone numbers. In our opinion, the fuss about this subject is grossly exaggerated. Of course, if you are sloppy with your computer security you run the risk that someone will try and break into it. We also know that no system is 100% waterproof. On the other hand, nobody seems to bother about the security of our traditional paper-based systems. We would like to remind our readers that there are very good security precautions available; some of them are: rigid discipline in password management, call-back modems, and encryption. Especially, the last-mentioned is very difficult to crack for an outsider. Moreover, the old law is still true: if your information is so sensitive that nobody is allowed to see it, do not put it on a computer system.

Reason to worry?

We have noticed in the recent past a tendency in the United States to react with some paranoia toward the development and success of new-technology-based information products and services based outside its own borders - especially in Europe. The attitude is not helped by the continuing acquisition of US information companies by non-US firms. All of this has its complement in the current dominance by the Japanese of numerous facets of the hardware market. Now we see that so prestigious an institution as the National Science Foundation has fallen into the same kind of 'mind-set' - or so it would appear. The NSF's present program planning and budget priorities are in part - according to its director Erich Bloch - conditioned by a perceived "challenge to US research preeminence from foreign competitors". We are not entirely sure just what he means by this, but are fairly confident that such is not the most wholesome approach to a formulation of national research policy. It seems furthermore that the NSF is drifting now more toward an interest in the commercial value of research results, rather than in the promotion of disinterested scientific inquiry. (One of the targeted areas in this context is telecommunications.) A significant level of co-funding for its projects by industry (and local governments) is certainly also a pertinent factor.

User communications

The customer newsletters produced by online system operators are usually everything but diffident in their style of writing, and certainly are not in the habit of offering extended vindications of their choices not to implement certain features in loading this or that data base. All the more reason to be struck by the content of an item in ESA-IRS's News & Views June issue concerning its BIOSIS file ("Although inversion of the abstracts might have appeared as a step forward, ..."). This perhaps has the flavor of 'methink she doth protest too much' (you may judge for yourself), but on the other hand shows a pleasant ingenuousness all too rare in the online information business, especially on the customer relations and promotional side.

Interconnection of data networks

A recent issue of the bulletin of the Dutch COBIDOC (one of the European national online centers) contains a very interesting and highly useful map of the interconnection between the various public networks which can be used to access the ESA-IRS services in Frascati, Italy. The organization is utterly confusing, and the author states quite rightly that, if anything in your connection goes wrong you will never find out where. In many countries the public relations and information services of the PTTs are quite good. But on an international level there is every reason to press for better information (and, let us not forget - network management).