

News, Trends and Comments

News

News from Japan

We have been able to set up a mechanism to get the latest news in our fields from Japan. We will start next issue, we hope. Look out for it: it will be relevant to all of us.

DIALOG on the block

Recent news from the U.S. has Lockheed DIALOG for sale. We have been able to discover that there are from 4 to 6 interested bidders and that the transaction is being handled by a New York mergers and acquisitions firm. Asking-prices are variously reported at \$US 30–150 million, and an announcement was expected by the New Year.

Legalities

Also a decision of the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals (California), the so-called Betamax Decision, is making news. Arising from videotape recorder technology, there are implications for videodisc and other magnetic media. The decision is said to hold that the manufacturer of the equipment has a liability for the copyright violations proceeding from the use of the gear. Undoubtedly this will go to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Anderla gone into retirement

Professor Georges Anderla has retired from the service of the European Commission in Luxemburg on November 1st. He was a strong and thus controversial man, but nevertheless deserves full credit for his attempts to bring the European information scene to maturity. Whether you liked his ideas or not, you will have to admit that he has done a lot to get information in Europe recognized as our major commodity. We shall certainly miss him in our profession, and hope that he will have many happy years of retirement.

Encyclopedic information online

Normally the emergence of new data bases would be kept for our section devoted to this area, but two major encyclopedia developments merit special mention. World Book Encyclopedia (Field Enterprises Educational Corporation) announced that online service based on this major U.S. encyclopedia will be available (via CompuServe) by next fall; and Arete's Academic American Encyclopedia (now to be handled by Grolier) was scheduled to be shown on videodisc at the Frankfurt Book Fair, with other showings, in the U.S., in 1982. Arete also disclosed that an online version via New York Times Information Service will be "up" by early 1982.

REMARC producer acquired by ITO

Acquisition of the Carrollton Press Inc., producer of REMARC, by the International Thomson Organization Ltd. has been announced. An International Thomson subsidiary, Research Publications Inc., was the actual acquiring unit. Plans call for the creation of an "international factor in automated library systems", a spokesman said.

EI

Engineering Index has been renamed Engineering Information Inc. in order to suggest the broad range of information now produced by the New York based organization.

Still another acquisition

Burroughs Corporation (parent of SDC Search Service) has come close to the acquisition of Memorex, producer of tapes, discs etc. Burroughs will purchase Memorex stock at \$US 14 per share. It was expected to complete the merger in December.

Reports from IIASA

IIASA, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, has sent us the following reports:

P. Bakonyi, I. Kiss, A. Petrenko and I. Sebestyen. Promotion of East-West computer communication in IIASA's international environment and the Hungarian case study (CP-81-12);

A. Labadi. IIASA's gateway system and experiments in daily operation (WP-81-37);

A. Labadi and I. Sebestyen. The role of the TPA-70 gateway-network in promoting transborder data flow of scientific information in an international setting (WP-81-122);

I. Sebestyen. Computerized message sending and teleconferencing in an international environment – present and future (WP-81-84);

H.A. Maurer, W. Rauch and I. Sebestyen. On alphabetic searching in videotex systems (WP-81-111);

H.A. Maurer, W. Rauch and I. Sebestyen. Videotex message service systems (WP-81-113).

B. Melichar. Non-procedural communication between users and application software (RR-81-22).

Copies may be obtained from IIASA, A-2361 Laxenburg, Austria.

Book on microcomputers

ASLIB has announced the commissioning of a book on microcomputer and word processor applications for library and information units, to be published in 1982. It is to be written by Jenny Collyer and Bob Winfield of the City of London Polytechnic.

SICOB aiming at the Guinness Book of Records?

SICOB, the French 'Salon International d'Informatique, Télématique, Communication, Organisation du Bureau et Bureautique', has announced that its latest exhibition, the 32nd, has drawn 363,504 visitors. The concurrent conference 'Convention Informatique' was attended by 3,175 delegates. The 32 study days organized in connection with the exhibition drew 9,000 persons. Is this just a sign that we are in a popular profession, or ...? Next one: September 20 to October 1, 1982.

Index production

Inforonics Inc. now has available new literature on the computer composition of indexes. 'Application Note 18' describes book and journal index production, and 'Application Note 20' describes separately published, primary indexes. This literature outlines the publishing procedure, from data-input methods to multiple uses of the final database. Automated production of indexes is the latest module to be added to TPS, Inforonics' Text Processing Service, a total system which begins with source documents or word-processing media and ends with printer-ready pages. For a copy of the Notes, write or call the Marketing Department, Inforonics Inc., 550 Newton Road, Littleton, MA 01460, (617) 486-8976.

French book on online searching

Infotecture, 11 Rue du Marché St.-Honoré, 75001 Paris, has published the first French book about online information retrieval: *Connaître et Utiliser les Banques de Données*. Written by D. Doré, H. Dor and P. Hassanaly, it costs Ffrs. 120 (in France) or Ffrs. 150 (outside France).

Commission's third three-year plan

Euronet/DIANE will become a public network managed by the PTT's in 1983. This is one of the items in the Commission's third three-year plan which has been announced in October. The plan will take another 15 million of European Accounting Units (approx. 9 million pounds). Other items in the plan are: a gateway to British Prestel, and the development of an integrated communication network for the Commission, called INSIS.

EUSIDIC to compare costs

EUSIDIC, in the person of its Technical Secretary, is making a comparison of the cost of searching public databases online, both to the U.S.A. and in Europe. The results will be publicly available. Contributions are eagerly awaited by Dr. John Silk, 5 Albert Road, Wokingham, Berks. RG11 2AL, U.K.

Software patented

A computer program called SWIFTANSWER has received a U.S. patent which is said to be one of the first issued. Patent Number 4,270,182 was awarded to S.P. Asija of ITT.

Information system not impressive

The U.S. General Accounting Office has reported on the development of a major energy information system, indicating that the U.S. Federal Power Commission's Regulatory Information System did not meet user needs, was not cost effective. Over 26 million dollars were spent over a decade with "miniscule results".

Data bases***SDC/ORBIT***

U.S. Requests for Proposals (USRFP) derived from *Commerce Business Daily* is offered in three segments: Announcements, Summaries and Amendments.

WATERLIT (Exclusive) is supplied by the South African Water Information Centre (SAWIC) with international coverage of water-related information. The file consists of 48,000 records from 1976 to date and is to be updated with about 12,000 new items annually.

DIALOG

Already available is MEDLINE which was loaded in three segments: 1966-74, 1974-79, and 1980-current. In development are MeSH and the Health Planning and Administration files.

Business International's BI/DATA file previously available through GEISCO (see also under I.P. Sharp).

BRS

Availability of BRS files through UNINET, from United Telecommunications Inc., is being offered on a trial basis.

Ulrich's International comprises familiar *Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory*, *Irregular Serials and Annuals*, and *Ulrich's Quarterly*.

Universal Serials and Book Exchange (USBE) is an index to the 10,000 most available titles from the U.S. Book Exchange. It features bibliographic data and subject headings from LC, NLM et al.

California Union List of Periodicals (CULP) is a finding-list for periodicals and serials held by over 600 special, public and other libraries, with an emphasis on the support of interlibrary loan activities.

I.P. Sharp

An economic data base from the U.S. National Planning Association has been given to Sharp on an exclusive basis. The U.S. economy from 1967 is projected with a potential of 200,000 time series on employment, income and population.

BI/DATA from Business International (see also under DIALOG) offers users national accounts, trade, industrial production, labor and demographic statistics for 131 countries. Time series and other statistical operations can be performed.

MEDLARS III

Under development contracts with Computer Horizons Inc. is a national biomedical holdings data base which will feature a numerical control (whatever happened to ISSN?) link between serial titles in NLM's serials data base and other serials files and collect bibliographic data for linked serials.

Dow Jones

Two new data bases: Weekly Economic Update, an economic news service

from Dow Jones publications; and Corporate Earnings Estimator for major corporations, with data from Zacks Investment Research Inc.

CAS Online

A new command language was introduced to CAS Online in October, and graphic structure input for queries was implemented in November. An HP 2647A terminal with special cassette from CAS is required.

A textual structure input using keyboard commands will be ready in December.

Teletex

In Europe 81, a journal issued by the CEC, November 1981, we read that:

The European Commission has given a contract to a multi-national team of companies to report on the development of teletex in Europe – a standard medium through which word processors of different makes can exchange information.

The British member of the consortium which has won the Commission's contract is Langton Information Systems, whose Graham Taylor says that the potential is enormous. Its implications, for electronic mail and data processing, he says, are not yet recognized. Teletex services are being set up by the post offices, or rather PTT's, in Germany, Switzerland and Sweden, and Britain's should begin next year.

The aim of the EEC contract is to find out whether the standards of performance set for teletex by the Consultative Committee on International Telephones and Telegraphs will form a base for office automation, rather than just being a super-telex; also whether INSIS, which is the inter-institutional network of the EEC, could use teletex, and how much; and whether the different teletex systems being developed in European countries are going to be compatible.

Apart from Langton, the project team includes Logica and CS&P of the U.K., Danet from Germany, Sema from France, Sobemap from Belgium and Teleplan from Sweden. Graham Taylor, the project head, says he will welcome submissions on the topic from any interested party, sent to Langton Information Systems at 133 Oxford Street, London W1.

Personal computers

Negotiations are going on between ICL and Sinclair (the manufacturer of those personal computers you can even buy in Heathrow's departure lounge) to cooperate in the development of a multifunctional terminal. Watch out: when these forces unite, a real breakthrough might become possible.

Viewdata for online training

A report on the use of Viewdata for online training has been published by PIRA, the research association for the paper and board, printing and packaging industries. It costs £10.00 and is available from Publications Office PIRA, Randalls Road, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 7RU, U.K.

INTUG again

The latest issue of the INTUG Newsletter (December, 1981) contains a wealth of information on various national and international telecommunication issues. This is just to whet your appetite. We will not quote it; if you would like to see it, convince your organization that you should apply for membership!

Conferences

March 9–11, 1982. Seminar on Digital Communications, 'Man-Machine Interaction', Zürich, Switzerland. Contact: Miss M. Grey, EAE, Siemens-Albis AG, CH-8047, Zürich.

March 21–23, 1982. ASIDIC Spring Meeting: Re-use of information – clarification of specific issues, New York. Contact: Ms. Jeanette Webb, ASIDIC Secretariat, P.O. box 8105, Athens, GA 30603. Tel. (404) 542–3106.

April 19–21, 1982. International Symposium on Local Computing Networks, Florence, Italy. Information: P. Ravasio, Ing. C. Olivetti S.P.A., Centro Studi, 10015 Ivrea, Italy.

May 12–14, 1982. EURIM 5: A European Conference on Research into the Management of Information Services and Libraries, Versailles, France. Contact: Conference Organizer, ASLIB, 3 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PL, U.K. Tel. 01 235 5050. Telex 23667.

May 24–25, 1982. ICSU AB Seminar: The Rôle of Information in the Innovative Process, Amsterdam, Netherlands. Contact: B.T. Stern, Honorary Treasurer, ICSU AB, c/o Elsevier Science Publishers, P.O. box 2400, 1000 CK Amsterdam. Tel. (020) 5803 609. Telex 18582.

September 12–16, 1982. 41st FID Congress: The Challenge of Information Technology, Hong Kong. Contact: B. Burton, Hong Kong Polytechnic Library, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Necrology

Paul W. Berthiaume, President of the New York Times Information Bank, died as a result of a fatal heart attack at the end of October. Berthiaume, 45, joined the New York Times Co. in January 1977, and was named President of the Information Bank in 1979.

Trends

Office automation might bring jobs.

The total effect of automation on employment in the United States over the last thirty years has been positive. This is the conclusion of the U.S. Department of Labor which was announced at an OECD conference in Paris. Despite office automation, employment in offices has increased from 10 million in 1960 (15% of the work force) to 18 million in 1980 (19%). The ministry is expecting continuing growth for the next decade.

Comments

Comments on telecommunications?

INTUG has made a call to generate more user feedback in the area of telecommunications. If you have anything to contribute, please send it to: Mr. B.C. Cullen, c/o Control Data Cybernet Europe Inc., Raketstraat 50, B-1130 Brussels.

Videotex

In the last EUSIDIC-Conference in Bern, Switzerland, our journal got extra publicity: one of the speakers on Videotex-systems waved the last issue of this journal saying that a News-item on Videotex (ISU vol. 1, nr. 2, p. 98) probably had been written by a Dutch neomarxist. To save your time, we repeat the first sentence: "Videotex-systems, like PRESTEL, are the parade-horses of some pseudo-monopolistic PTT's." If this is so provocative, why not send us a couple of letters to the Editor?

CCITT-activity

We too have the nasty habit of making jokes about PTT's. Nevertheless, let us appreciate that a lot of people spend a lot of effort trying to get things right. Computer Networks, May 1981, reports that in the period 1977-1980 CCITT-representatives had 1,200 meeting days, published 6,054 contributions and approved 204 new recommendations.