The Intranet: Corporate Information On-line

[This is the third in a series of articles on the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's Internet Implementation Plan. The articles published previously, **We're on the Internet!** (August 14, 1995) and **Research On-line: The DFAIT Research Page** (September 25, 1995) have been updated and are re-released here for reference.]

Internet Implementation Plan:
Reviewing Our Progress

Since the advent of SIGNET, the Department has been looking to technology for new ways to add value to services by streamlining processes and reducing costs. In 1994, the Department embarked on a campaign to automate its public enquiries and publications distribution functions to make them more efficient and less costly. In July 1995, the Department launched its World Wide Web (WWW) Site on the Internet to enhance the service offered to clients by providing them with instant, cost-effective access to up-to-date information on the Department's services and activities (see **We're on the Internet!**, page 6).

On March 21, the Department will launch the **Intranet** at Headquarters. A strategic step in information dissemination, the Intranet will provide departmental users with access to up-to-date corporate information and documents via a SIGNET-connected internal Web service. The service will be implemented at wide bandwidth missions (London, Paris and U.S. missions) later in the year.

The Intranet is available to departmental employees **only** and cannot be accessed by the general Internet population.

The Intranet:
Meeting the Demand for Efficient, Cost Effective Delivery of Corporate Information

The Intranet is one of the four Internet-related projects underway at Headquarters that are part of the Department's long-term strategic planning in the field of information management/technology.*

A joint effort between the Information Resources/Information Systems (SKD/STD) Bureaux and the Corporate Communications Division (BCC), the objectives of the Intranet are to facilitate access to corporate information, to reduce corporate printing costs and to provide a more effective means of searching for and locating information of interest to departmental staff. As presently planned, the system will initially complement dissemination on paper. Where effective and feasible, the Intranet will eventually replace paper to a significant extent.

The Intranet is also designed to provide a news group or electronic conferencing capability on SIGNET that will allow users to post messages on a wide variety of subjects on an electronic bulletin board (see page 4, *SIGNET News* of May 15, 1995). This feature will not be immediately available, as it still needs careful examination to determine demand,

implementation feasibility and resource requirements.

What are the advantages of the Intranet to the Department?

SIGNET architecture parallels that of the Internet. This has enabled us to directly apply Internet information tools to our needs (e.g., Netscape browser software) and to develop the Intranet.

In addition to reducing departmental printing and distribution costs, the Intranet has the potential to speed up access to corporate information and thereby provide a better service to users. It also allows the information to be available electronically on demand, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Intranet is also an improvement over the existing multiple i:\ drives at Headquarters (e.g., i:\corpinfo), as its design and structure make it is easier and quicker to locate information. To reach the desired information, simply click on it.

The Intranet represents a broad effort to improve the release of information to staff, as well as to improve service delivery and decrease publishing costs. Simply put, it represents a step towards more effective and strategic management of information.

Missions and the Intranet

Although SIGNET provides the potential to distribute documents to all missions in electronic form, there are practical limits on the