

World-wide computer services

I.P. Sharp Associates, a computer firm located in Toronto, will be supplying computer services to the Institute of International Finance's (IIF) member banks throughout the world.

The IIF, headquartered in Washington, D.C., has a membership of nearly 200 banks, including many of the world's largest. Its purpose is to provide the world's financial community with better information about the economic situation and evolving debt position of borrower countries.

One of the functions of the IIF will be to gather country economic information to fill the gaps of existing efforts, and to furnish factual country reports on the world's major country borrowers. This information is for the member banks' use in individually assessing credit to public and private sectors in the international markets. Membership is open to all banks with cross-border exposure.

Instant availability

I.P. Sharp Associates has offices in 22 countries and a global communications network that provides access to the I.P. Sharp data centre from 600 cities. The IIF will store its economic information on the I.P. Sharp computer, thus making it instantly available to all member banks. With a telephone call placed locally in any of the 600 cities, and a simple terminal connection to the I.P. Sharp network, member banks will be able to display and optionally manipulate the data. Resultant credit judgments are left strictly to each bank.

The Country Reporting System, developed for the IIF by I.P. Sharp Associates, will be available to all its member banks by the end of the year, with data on approximately 30 developing nations, and 75 line items for each. The data will cover such items as central government budget information, balance of payments, long term and total debt, and key economic indicators.

In addition to the Country Reporting System, I.P. Sharp Associates provides online access to more than 100 public data bases. Those of specific interest to the IIF's members include the World Bank Debt Tables, the Bank for International Settlements Data, the IMF's International Financial Statistics, and United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics.

Courts enter satellite age

The space age came to the Supreme Court of Canada recently as lawyers in Vancouver argued, *via* satellite transmission, for leave to appeal six lower court rulings. The two-way television experiment went off without a hitch.



Telesat Canada receiver dish outside Supreme Court building in Ottawa.

Chief Justice Bora Laskin and two fellow judges gazed steadily at two television screens on a desk in front of the high court bench. Five more screens were placed in the courtroom for an audience that filled most of the seats and included Robert McKercher of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, president of the Canadian Bar Association.

"I thought that it was very good," Mr. McKercher said. "One motion illustrated the value of this thing: the lawyer talked for five minutes before they dismissed his case."



Lawyers in Vancouver appear on the monitor in the Supreme Court of Canada in Ottawa via a two-way satellite TV link.

"I have never been able to understand why the country has to pay homage to an institution 4 800 kilometres from Vancouver," Mr. McKercher added. The court should go to the country, and "we ought to take a serious look at this electronic gadgetry".

The lawyers who appeared on TV were seeking permission from the court to go to Ottawa to argue their cases more fully. Normally, this sort of application requires a lawyer to fly to Ottawa, book into a hotel and wait for his approximately 15-minute encounter with the judges before returning home.

"I'm pleased as punch the way this worked," lawyer Brian Williams, who has been working toward this experiment for several years, said in an interview.

It also has been a favourite project of Mr. Justice Willard Estey of the Supreme Court, who was among the judges hearing the cases. "It took four years for the Canadian Bar Association to wake up," he said in an interview later.

Other Supreme Court judges were "astounded as to how easy it was", Judge Estey added.

What was best, he said, was that appearing on television seemed to make lawyers "much more economical of time and very conscious of their words. Arguments weren't half what they would have been had they been here". Disposing of the six motions for leave to appeal took about 90 minutes.

Total cost of the satellite experiment is \$7 000. Two channels on the *Anik C* satellite were required, one for sending the signal and one for receiving.