



Ten megabytes! What an appetite!

What if the Lights Go Out?

Some people instantly connect the word "crash" with tumbling stock prices and financial disaster. But for those who live in the electronic world of computers, a crash is the nightmarish experience of losing the data in your computer memory because of malfunction or power failure.

Fret not. COSICS has been designed to minimize the risk of data loss because of equipment or power failure. Those interested in the nuts and bolts of the system will be relieved to know that COSICS' central processing units (CPUs) will not derive their power directly from a wall outlet. Instead, an intermediary uninterrupted power supply (UPS) will be inserted between the computer and local power supply.

The UPS performs two functions. First, it eliminates power surges which can cause the loss of data. Second, it works like a large battery should the power go out. Thus someone using the system will not even notice the short

interruptions. For longer power breakdowns the UPS will provide roughly 10 minutes of power for an orderly shutdown.

Also, as part of the normal operating procedure, the Telecommunications and Systems Security Officer will "back up" the system regularly. This entails copying all disk files onto tape at the end of each working day. The backup procedure provides the day-to-day insurance against massive data loss.

The WIN Exports Connection

According to Deputy Project Director Roger Chan, WIN users will enjoy "the best of both worlds" with the implementation of COSICS. WIN PCs will be enhanced to perform a dual function, so that they can operate within either the COSICS or the WIN environment.

"In this way, WIN users will be able to choose the environment most appropriate to the tasks at hand, and will not be burdened with two terminals on their desk," Chan explains.

Those working with WIN will keep their local area network (LAN), and be allowed to operate separately from COSICS. At the same time, their PCs will be directly connected to COSICS.

This arrangement will allow users to transfer files from WIN to COSICS and vice-versa, guided by a menu system in COSICS software. They may also choose to use WordPerfect and then transfer their documents into the COSICS ALL-IN-1 environment.

FORUM

This space is reserved for YOU. Your feedback is vital to making COSICS a practical tool in your everyday work routine. Let's hear your concerns, questions, comments and musings. As space permits, we will air topics of general interest in this column.

You were asking ...

Can COSICS access on-line data bases in the United States and Canada?

Yes, the COSICS architecture does permit access to external data bases. Since this feature will be programmed later on in the first year of COSICS, details are not yet available. However, missions will continue to be required to pay for access to external databases.

What sort of training do current plans call for?

Training and support is provided in a five-point package: an initial training period of five days; follow-up training; a customized training manual; a computer-based training program on individual terminals; and a phone-in "help centre". In addition, individuals who pick up the system rapidly will be invited to help fellow workers. Training will be targeted to the needs of each category of employee, and will take into account the tasks they must perform. For example, training in word processing will be more advanced for SCYs than officers.

Is COSICS a totally telex-compatible system?

Yes, an interface between COSICS and the telex world is planned.

Using COSICS, will we be able to send material to multiple addressees by FAX?

Although FAX is not part of COSICS per se, its communications circuits have been sized to permit parallel transmission of material by FAX. A FAX policy (please refer to MIT-6233 dated November 15, 1988) has been circulated to United States missions.

Will our knowledge of WIN be beneficial?

Yes, any familiarity with computers, word processing systems, spreadsheet or database applications will be beneficial in understanding and using COSICS.

Will officers do their own typing? Will they be given typing courses?

Some will; some won't. Experience has shown that junior level staff adapt more rapidly, perhaps because they have to fight for secretarial time. Directors and senior managers will probably not do a lot of document typing, but are expected to make use of terminals for messaging. Other organizations have found that at the office level, each individual adapts to the system's capabilities in his or her own way.