

There are now more than 500 publicly-available databases in Canada, over 2 000 in the US and the market is growing constantly. Keeping track of the many available services can be difficult. It may also be time consuming and confusing to maintain contact with separate information services since each has its own set of passwords, account codes and information retrieval routines.

In response to these problems, Telecom Canada has developed a new service designed to greatly simplify matters for database users. Called iNet 2000, the system acts as a guide and gateway, analogous to the classified section of the telephone directory, to a wide range of computer-based information services. Through iNet 2000, users can browse through directories of databases, gain immediate access to the services banks they wish to search, gain access to electronic messaging and pay only one monthly bill for most services used.

Operating on Telecom Canada's nationwide public packet switched network, Datapac, the iNet 2000 system can be used to access databases in other countries via packet switched networks.

The system also supports a wide range of terminals and can be tailored to the user's language needs (either English or French), as well as to specific personal, business or closed user group needs. A profile on each user is stored in the system which thus "remembers", among other things, the person's language preference, his or her level of expertise with the system and the services that the user is authorized to access. Users sign on and identify themselves to the system only once, regardless of the number of services they access.

There are three directories in the system:

- a) A national directory that lists all databases available through iNet. Listings are indexed by subjects and name and can be searched using a menu, or key words.
- b) An organization directory, which is suited to the needs of a particular organization, that lists which services can be accessed by members of the organization.
- c) A personalized directory that allows individuals to list by service name the databases they access on a regular basis.

Telecom Canada completed a successful technical field trial of the system in July 1983 and the service is currently undergoing an 18-month market trial which will include participants from a wide variety of industries and fields. The system has been enhanced for the market trial so that it will be easier to use, will accommodate various levels of expertise and will allow a transaction capability.

