

In 1984 IBM Canada Ltd. joined Expo as a corporate sponsor (publicly announced in March, 1985). The sponsorship agreement included provision of hardware and software, for the creation of a state-of-the-art data retrieval system which would allow information officers to retrieve information within seconds of having a caller posing a question.

The IBM system customized for EXPO INFO is known as the Professional Office System (PROFS). The system is particularly appropriate to EXPO INFO as it offers quick access to the data base, electronic messaging, electronic mail, a scheduling program and spreadsheet capacity.

By January of 1985 the PROFS system with the EXPO INFO data base had been operational for seven months. With updates and new material being added to the data base daily, the objective for 1985 was to continue to update both software and brochure contents for information packages - both of these developments were crucial to streamlining the inquiry response process. The 2.5 minute time response (which originally served as a basis for the budget) was thus reduced to 2 minutes as a direct result of this updating and streamlining process.

Based on information from past expositions, it was estimated that 45% of exposition visitors stay with family or friends in the host city or region. To promote Expo to this market, the B.C. Invites The World program was initiated in September of 1985. The program called upon all British Columbians, as residents of the host province, to send to EXPO 86 lists of the names of their friends and relatives and Expo in turn would issue on their behalf a customized invitation bearing the signature of Premier Bennett. EXPO INFO provided the skill and manpower for designing the program, issuing bid requests, and program implementation for promotional literature (including all B.C. householder, display cards for banks, gas stations, supermarkets), window banners, data entry of submissions, laser printing of letters and distribution. Using the PROFS system, information officers were also used to input up to 3 invitee names (per caller) directly into the computer and offer information on where to mail longer lists of invitees. By December 4, more than 1.2 million people had been invited. With such an overwhelming response, it was decided to extend the program into spring, 1986.