Although it is distributed widely, the Pan does not automatically go to locally engaged staff, who represent almost half of the Department. We, therefore, decided to develop the SIGNET Newsletter as an attachment to the Pan in the hope that it will reach the wider audience at posts.

In the past few months, we have also stepped up our communications with missions being brought onto SIGNET. I was in Paris when SIGNET was implemented. We were generally happy with ICONDESK, but because we had not been fully briefed, when problems arose, this caused unnecessary annoyance. It is easy to say that we can forgive ourselves for this oversight because we were running against the clock to implement SIGNET, but I assure you that we welcome the opportunity to improve our communications with the missions.

How can we use SIGNET to better integrate mission operations with headquarters, especially given security constraints? One of the main frustrations we've had with SIGNET to date is its ability to communicate only to the PROTECTED (non-sensitive) level. This has affected our ability to easily exchange documents, and especially policy papers, with missions. SIGNET-C2, however, will allow us to process material from PROTECTED-SENSITIVE up to SECRET in an environment that better links the whole Department. SIGNET-C2 is presently being deployed at Headquarters and will soon be available at missions. Facilities are also available to go beyond SECRET for those missions that require it.

Q. Are you still on schedule with respect to SIGNET implementation?

R.K. The short answer is yes. In 1991, when the Department decided to replace COSICS with SIGNET, we made a commitment to the Treasury Board and to central government resource management that we would deliver SIGNET on time and on budget. March 31st is our deadline. There may be some missions that will not be on SIGNET (or some form of SIGNET) by that time because of operational constraints, but most will.

Q. What do you see as the Department's next challenge with respect to SIGNET?

R.K. Answering that question remains our biggest challenge. The Department is at the cutting edge of technology. In our use of technology, we are, for example, ahead of other federal government departments. As well, our global integrated system of communications exceeds the way in which both the U.K and the United States communicate with their missions around the world.

> How do we keep up with technological advancement? By seeking out changes and by positioning our resources, both human and financial, to take advantage of them.

With the rapid evolution of technology, however, you can't stay comfortably on top for very long. In the near future, the telephone, the television and the computer will be one. They will be voice-activated and we will, as a consequence, be receiving messages in a different way. Video-conferencing and other forms of visual communication will be developed, evolved and deployed. How do we keep up with technological advancement? By seeking out changes and by positioning our resources, both human and financial, to take advantage of them.

The immediate or the medium-term future requires us to bring in fax capability and to develop bulletin board applications. How we access and use information in an electronic age is the key. Our ability to deal with security issues surrounding interconnecting with Internet is also very important. The user today will be able to electronically key for subjects and pull that information from a data bank — be it the library, information retrieval in electronic filing systems (BICOs) or from other sources. That whole concept of "pull architecture" changes the way we work and the way we gather information, deal with it, and store it. We've got an exciting future to anticipate. With the right people — and adequate resources — the Department will meet its challenge.

> "I think the progress made by SIGNET to date has astounded skeptics everywhere and at every level in the Department."
>
> Jocelyn LeClerc (GGD)