Solving the Year **2000** Date Problem

time is running out...

In the October issue of *Connexions*, we introduced "the year 2000 date problem," [1] a serious computer problem that encompasses all computers, software and electronically-processed and stored information. This month, in more detail, we tell you what DFAIT is doing about it — and let you know that each of us can help resolve the problem.

First, a little background. How did the problem arise? Programmers in the 60s and 70s used a two-digit format to show the year — 1996 was simply 96. Furthermore, many computer manufacturers have built their equipment to recognize dates only up to 1999. In the year 2000, most computer hardware and software will read 00, not as 2000, but as 1900, and this has obvious serious implications for all organizations, public and private, that use computers. Some organizations recognized the millennium bug and fixed it, others did not and hoped that it would go away. DFAIT recognizes the magnitude of the problem and is doing something about it.

"Begin early and finish early"

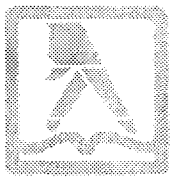
As the organization responsible for overseeing the effective and efficient management of IMT, the Information Management and Technology Bureau (SXD) has established a department-wide Year 2000 Working Group to develop an action plan to resolve the problem for the Department. The onus for Year 2000 compliance is a shared responsibility. SXD will coordinate, support and advise on the activity. "SXD is responsible for ensuring that all SIGNET 'designated' and 'classified' computers and their base software (e.g., ICONDESK, WordPerfect, Quattro Pro, etc.) are fully year 2000 compliant. This also includes all MITNET and telecommunications equipment. Our clients are responsible for ensuring their standalone, workgroup and corporate software applications are year 2000 compliant. The Working Group will share all problems and solutions that relate to the year 2000 so as to minimize redundant efforts within DFAIT," says Year 2000 coordinator Brian Kirk of the Direction and Planning Division (SXP). "Begin early and finish early" is SXD's stated goal to resolve the situation," says Mr. Kirk.

To foster awareness, articles that discuss the nature and magnitude of the problem have been posted on the Intranet (//folio.lbp/english/index.htm). Year 2000 compliance clauses have been included in all RFPs and contracts issued for the procurement of IMT products and services and SXP's Quality Assurance unit has integrated Year 2000 compliance checking into its ongoing software testing and verification process. A project has also been initiated to evaluate DFAIT's 9,000+ computers at HQ and missions to identify PCs that are not Year 2000 compliant.

The millennium bug is not just the concern of DFAIT's computer specialists. It is our individual concern. There are, in fact, specific things that each of us can do to help solve the problem. Next month, we will provide more information on this issue.

[1] see "The Year 2000 Date Problem," *Connexions* No. 6/96, October 20, 1996, page 7.

NEW DFAIT Telephone Directory now available



The staff directories, including the DFAIT Telephone Directory, have been updated to reflect the changes that have occurred as a result of the recent reorganization. As you know, the new telephone directory is NOW available in English (the French edition of the Directory is expected early in the New Year) **and will be on the Intranet in mid-December, with a link to the DFAIT Web site.**

If you have private sector clients who ask if there is a current, online directory for the Department, the answer is "Yes!" Since June 1996, the Directory is available via the DFAIT Home Page. Just click the red telephone icon on the Page and it will link to the DFAIT section of the Government Electronic Directory Service (GEDS), which provides directory information for all federal government departments. The information in the directory database will be kept current by an electronic feed to GEDS each time the DFAIT Telephone Directory is updated.