that the basics of SIGNET are in place," said Mr. Rosenthal in a recent conversation. For Mr. Rosenthal, who understands well the challenges of technology because he himself has worked hard to adapt to SIGNET, that means defining STC's role in terms of providing products and services to all Department employees to ensure effective and enjoyable use of the system. This has translated into three linked objectives:

- to develop a long-term plan for delivering training to all SIGNET users;

- to consult with clients to ensure that new and current software products meet their requirements; and

- to educate clients about technology and its impact on the way they work.

Long-term training

As a result of feedback from clients and from professional computer trainers, STC has recognized that training will always have to be provided. If training is to be responsive to client needs, Mr. Rosenthal argues, "then we have to work more closely with the client than we have in the past to help determine those needs and define how they can best be met."

Client consultations

The key to successful client service is to work with both client and technology developer and foster an atmosphere where problems can be openly discussed and quickly resolved. We all recognize, however, that there has been too big a gap between the client and engineer. Mr. Rosenthal believes that STC has begun to close that gap through a well-designed consultation process to inform and engage all staff. This process, he reasons, will result in an easier adaptation to technology and software products that are fine-tuned to fit the way you work — not the other way

around. Here are the key ways in which STC consults with its clients.

1. **SIGNET Users Group (SNUG)** has been re-designed to work in close association with STC to ensure that the evolution of SIGNET is directed by user needs, expectations and requirements. Contact your SNUG representative if you have issues or concerns about SIGNET or suggestions and ideas you would like the committee to consider.

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2. **SIGNET Suggestion Box** was added to ICONDESK in an effort to improve SIGNET's ability to meet client needs. Doug Rosenthal encourages you to use the box for any suggestions you have for improvements to SIGNET or new services you would like to see on SIGNET. (Hint: to access the Box, use the *Query* function of the Send Mail window and type SigSug.)

3. **SIGNET Newsletter** focuses on the close working relationship between SIGNET and its clients. It has been redesigned recently to provide more information on SIGNET than its predecessor, SIGNET News, and also includes articles on information technology of general interest to the Department.

Adaptation to technology

"I don't think any of us realized the impact SIGNET would have on the Department," Mr. Rosenthal reflected. "It has changed the way we do our jobs

— the responsibilities we have and the very way that information is sent and received. Managers must understand that officers can exchange information directly and without prior authorization and without a record of the exchange. Everyone must recognize that this informality brings risks and accountability."

How do we come to grips with this situation? Mr. Rosenthal believes that one way is though education. STC is working with CFSI to include in the courses the Institute offers a module that teaches participants about information technology and the changes it brings to the workplace. A sub-committee of SNUG is also tasked with studying these issues on an on-going basis. "As a result," Mr. Rosenthal said, "over time we should all become more comfortable and competent with technology."

Future directions

Does the Department really need to stay on the leading edge of technology? This is an often heard question from frustrated clients — from those who have found the transition to technology a difficult one, as well as from those who had high expectations of SIGNET and find that its current "bugs", quirks and limitations get in the way of working smarter. While Doug Rosenthal agrees that we are always shaped by our means of communication and should seek its challenges, he would rather use, in the optimum way possible, what we already have — until we are well trained and really comfortable using technology.

"I know from personal experience that adaptation to technology takes time and is not without frustration," he said. "I am, however, very encouraged by the progress made to date by all of our clients. The hard work, effort and enthusiasm that has gone into adapting to SIGNET is beginning to pay off, especially as the system itself is getting easier to use."