and the fortnightly bag.

How about on-line desk-to-desk communications and instant electronic file transfers between missions that are routine procedure? Or, conversations with colleagues and support staff that take place on-screen with supporting data a key tap away? No more blood pressure mounting as you get yet another busy signal.

Remember Telex and FAX machines before they became museum relics? The diplomatic pouch before it lost its cachet? That was before the foreign service mastered the basics of classified and unclassified, around-the-clock communications.

Sound a bit far-fetched? Well, the diplomatic pouch will likely always be around, FAX is still pretty new stuff and the pen is not ready to go into retirement just yet, but much of the rest is around the next corner. At a time when Departmental demands are increasing, and the resources to meet them diminish, office automation is the answer, not only to immediate needs, but for dealing with future unknowns.

While robots to bring you your morning coffee and tidy your desk have yet to be perfected, many things that, as recently as ten years ago bordered on science fiction, can now be done with

computer technology. The purpose of COSICS — the office of tomorrow today — is not only to enhance employee productivity and efficiency, but to make things easier for everyone as a support for established procedures and work habits. It is expected to be fully integrated into the External Affairs workplace as early as the 1990s.

Coming On-line Together

The concept of COSICS was developed with all employees of the Department in mind, both in Canada and abroad. It is user-oriented and will be user-driven. Staff participation in its development has been and will continue to be a critical factor in the project's success.

To help realize COSICS' goal as a friendly system, a Users' Group Sub-Committee was established to encourage staff involvement, anticipate employee concerns and channel the ideas, suggestions and practical requirements of the

people who will be using the work stations, into the development of a system that works for everyone.

The twelve person Users' Group includes Jim Junke, Lillian Thomsen-Voore, Keith Carter, Jean-Marc Duval, Ben Pflanz, Ron Halpin, Guy Salesse, Betty Dolan, Terry Cohen, Cary Dark, Michel Desloges and Alice Power. It comprises representation from all four streams: political-economic, commercial-economic, aid and immigration; reflects a cross-section of personal interests; includes men, women, anglophones and francophones; and runs the gamut from the working to the management level.

Jim Junke, Deputy Director (Policy) in the Resource Management Division, heads the Users' Group, one of six sub-committees established to evaluate the development of COSICS and guide its integration into the Department. Junke: "95 percent of end-users couldn't care less about what the architecture (architecture?) is, what technical and security concerns are. They want to know, what am I going to see on my screen? How many buttons am I going to have to push to do things? Am I going to have to be a typing wizard?"

Touch Base

With the COSICS Project Management Office

COSICS is your system. You can help tailor it to your needs and make it work for you.

The COSICS Project Management Office (MIDC), located on the 14th floor of the Fontaine Building, is your rallying point. Its staff of twelve, headed by the Project Manager Bob MacPhee, includes Deputy Project Director Roger Chan, Executive Secretary David Brisco, Doug McDonald, Bob Patterson, Barry Trott, Earl Dooley and Helene Lavoie from External Affairs; Manager of Industrial Benefits Kurt Theoret from DRIE; and Director of Procurement Tom Bartello, who heads the team from DSS which includes Lloyd Anstey and Edith Cherrin.

Half the 14th floor houses the project office and the rest will contain classrooms and a model embassy, completely

fitted with a COSICS installation, to provide training in a mission environment. Eventually the whole floor will be a secure COSICS Management Site and access will be controlled.

But for the time being it is a place where you can direct practical suggestions, air your concerns, check out the system as it emerges from an idea on paper to a physical reality and generally touch base.

Employee feedback is vital and your comments are welcomed. To get that feedback going and to keep it coming, the COSICS Project Management Office will regularly publish a COSICS Newsletter, a communications channel through which you can stay on top of developments and in-the-know about COSICS.

For Your Eyes Only

Bet you didn't know that...

■ External Affairs goes through 12 million pieces of paper a year.
■ The Department maintains 50,000 archives files and 500,000 volumes.
■ You will soon become what is known as an "end user".
■ In 1985–86, 7.5 million messages, or 4.5 billion word groups, were handled by Telecoms.

FIRST THERE WAS THE WORD...

Now There is COSICS

Remember the T.V. cartoon called "The Jetsons"? It was about a typical American family in the very distant future and featured suburban homes suspended in space, a jet-propelled, airborne facsimile of today's family car and television screen communications instead of telephones. Robots did the housework and Junior zipped next door to visit his pals with the aid of a rocket fueled back-pack. It's too bad that electronic maids are not yet consumer items, but much of the rest, considered to be science fiction at the time, has been developed and is available today.

Space stations and industrial robotics are no longer considered amazing; sophisticated domestic-convenience and personal entertainment gadgets are taken for granted; and micro chip-influenced office automation is now being widely used. These rapid developments are both exciting and scary, particularly in the work place where job confidence and security may seem threatened by faster, more efficient and unfamiliar work tools. However, as technology is introduced into traditional office environments, more and more people are surprised at the ease with which they acquire computer skills.

As with all new things apprehension can be an obstacle to appreciating what will become familiar and indispensable. De-mystifying the office of tomorrow and keeping the Department abreast of developments is the purpose of the COSICS Newsletter.

Conceived to lead the introduction of office automation into the Department of External Affairs, as the Department moves to implement its Long Range Management Plan (LRMP), it will help bridge the gap between the pen and the computer, for both Canada-

based personnel and staff at missions around the world.

COSICS is the symbol for the Canadian On-Line Secure Information and Communication System, an office automation and enhanced communication project endorsed by Ministers and Senior Management. It is a concept that was developed in 1986 by a group, good-naturedly referred to as the "Gang of Four", in response to recommendations that came out of the Department's 1985–86 Operational Review.

Recognizing that advantage was not being taken of available proven technology, and under pressure to reduce resources, the Department felt it had gone as far as it could go without some fundamental changes in the way it operated. The introduction of technology seemed to be the obvious solution and the "Gang of Four" were enlisted to establish criteria and specifications for a system specially tailored to the unique requirements of External Affairs. The "Gang" comprised Doug Woods, Bob MacPhee, Howard Balloch and Paul Dunseath.

From the outset, preserving the existing foreign service culture was a priority. Bob MacPhee: "COSICS is not intended to change the way people work. It is intended to support them in working according to their present habits." According to Doug Woods, it was decided that opportunities for productivity gains lie not in changing the process, but by providing tools to aid the Department. COSICS will enhance the way External Affairs does business, not replace it.

The team is taking an innovative and fast-track approach. To circumvent the risk of "getting a camel instead of a horse", they needed something that