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COSICS

Canadian On - Line Secure Information and Communication System

COSICS Now Up and Running

Feedback from Pilot Sites

Through the summer months, a group of employees at Headquarters and at the Permanent Mission in New York (PERMISNY) were the first to get hands-on experience with the new equipment. There was no formal training given until August, so those who received their terminals as part of the pilot followed a first rough draft of the COSICS manual and helped each other.

Generally, the initial impressions of COSICS were favourable. Here are some of the opinions and observations of those who participated at the pilot sites:

Louise Olivier, secretary to the Director General, International Organizations Bureau, is one of 20 Headquarters employees with a COSICS terminal on her desk. She had some previous experience with a less sophisticated computer system while working in private industry, and is impressed with COSICS' potential. At the same time, Olivier finds it simple to use.

"I think the basics are very easy to learn. It's a matter of following the instructions in the manual. There are very few things you can do to make an absolute mess of things."

Initially, Olivier is using the system for electronic messaging and scheduling events for her boss, Chris Westdal. She finds both features are great time-savers for both Westdal and herself.

"A person in his position receives an awful lot of phone calls, and COSICS is a terrific way for me to send a brief on-line message saying 'so-and-so called and this is what he wants.'

"One of the advantages is that he can look at messages at his convenience, and not be constantly interrupted by a buzzer. He can make much better use of his time." Another advantage, Olivier says, is

the ease with which they can communicate with PERMISNY, getting around busy phone lines, and giving quick feedback on texts. She foresees that the same will apply to their dealings with other missions when they come onto the network.

Claire Journault, secretary to Associate Under Secretary of State Raymond Chrétien, had never used a computer before. Over the summer, she familiarized herself with some COSICS features, as did he, and both have been sending and receiving electronic messages. Journault anticipates that after her training sessions she will use COSICS extensively.

"So far, I like the system. I think the monitor is easy to read, I like the keyboard, and I'm looking forward to using it as my daily typewriter."

In PERMISNY two months after the installation, many of the staff were hesitant to use the new equipment, as is often the case when new technology comes onto the office scene. **Manon Verreault**, a secretary who is a keen COSICS user, said it is hard to understand why. "We're having fun with it," she said.

She also finds it a major improvement over the old word-processing equipment, which was prone to frequent breakdowns.

"The first thing I realized is that I can now work at my desk. When I worked in the word-processing room, I had to go back to my office for the information I needed to answer a caller. Now with everything at hand, I can work more quickly and efficiently."

Colleague **Bill Milner**, the mission's registry clerk, has been using COSICS since the day it was operational. A self-described "hacker" or computer enthusiast, he had many good things to say about the new system. "The word processor does just about