

SECTION 4: ISSUES FACED BY INFORMATION PROVIDERS

1. New Technology

Videotex is a new information technology which, although it has its roots in traditional data processing and telecommunications, must be approached in fundamentally different ways. It must first and foremost, be viewed as a communications medium, not unlike the traditional communications media of print, newspapers and broadcast. In approaching videotex, it is important to focus on the user of the information and on the potential and constraints of the medium as a communications vehicle. To the Information Provider, knowledge of the technology itself is not necessary, other than to the extent it impacts the access and use of the information.

2. Industry in Early Development stages

The initial focus has been on standards and field trials. The Canadian government, through the Department of Communications, has contributed significantly to the creation of the industry with the development of Telidon, promotion of standards and support of the initial field trials. The Department of External Affairs continues to provide key support for the export marketing of videotex hardware, software and information content products. As a direct result of these efforts, Telidon was accepted as the basis for the North American Presentation Level Protocol (NAPLPS). With the technology proven and various field trials in Canada and the U.S. completed, the industry is moving into a significant growth period. The rate of that growth will be in large measure dependent on the success in addressing the real information needs of the consumers, the end users.

As the industry is positioning itself for a rapid takeoff, there are relatively few models for the type of business relationships that will emerge as the industry matures. Potential Information Providers are advised to become familiar with the many joint ventures which have been formed as companies seek to gain entry and experience in the new industry. Annual videotex conferences and trade shows are held in major centres in the U.S. and Europe. These provide an opportunity to gain knowledge of the recent developments in the industry and to make valuable contacts. Associations such as the Videotex Industry Association (VIA) and the Videotex Information Service Providers Association of Canada (VISAPAC) have been formed to provide important communication links within the industry.