

As a result of a North American Workshop on Environmental Information (Mexico City, October 1993), Canada is participating in several trilateral working groups on standards and methods of data collection and analysis, including the integration of environmental data with economic accounts.

Computer Networks

One of the most important developments has been the growth of computer networks. Domestic and international use of these networks for environmental information is expanding rapidly. At relatively low cost, they offer the potential for almost universal access to information. They also offer the potential to reduce the need for paper documentation and travel.

NirvCentre/WEB is the Canadian node of the APC (Association for Progressive Communications) electronic network. The APC aims to provide a globally interconnected network for the free and balanced flow of information. NirvCentre hosts the exchange of information among environment and development NGOs in Canada, and connects Canada to the stream of computer communications between the north and south nodes of APC.

The IISD uses NirvCentre/WEB to provide global access to its IISDnet, which carries Sourcebase and Linkages. Updated monthly, Sourcebase identifies key organizations, leading thinkers in sustainable development, and the best publications, communication vehicles, and electronic resources. Subscribers can access Sourcebase using a variety of typical Internet tools. Linkages provides electronic connections to other relevant information on Internet. Linkages carries the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, including the full text of papers tabled at conferences. In a four-month period, there were over 50 000 file accesses to Linkages from about 40 countries.

The Northern Information Network, operated by the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, covers social, environmental, economic, and other information. It accommodates traditional as well as scientific knowledge databases.

Natural Resources Canada makes geographical and environmental information available on Internet. Launched in October 1994, the service makes use of the National Atlas Information Service (NAIS) Internet link. The contents include map-based data, electronic versions of the State of the Environment Directorate's *Environmental Indicator Bulletin* (supplied by Environment Canada), and graphics. Natural Resources Canada developed NAISMap, the first World Wide Web-based mapping tool; it allows users to create custom maps from the National Atlas thematic layers.

Environment Canada has established its own connection, the Green Lane, to the international network. The Green Lane makes available information on domestic and international environmental issues, and services, like weather. A product of the Green Lane, the Environmental Knowledge Network (EKN), also described in the section of this report on science for sustainable development, carries a directory of domestic and international environmental information. This is designed to help people find the

In November 1994, the first section of the Green Lane was unveiled. It allows schools, the Canadian public, and people all around the world to have access to environmental information. Users have a single point of access to Environment Canada's vast information holdings, such as weather reports, news releases, speeches, scientific reports, environmental tips, and names of contacts. The Green Lane also provides direct access to the office of the Minister, to all Environment Canada Internet sites across the country, and to various other environmental sites on the Internet. In the first three months of operation, about 20 000 people used this new service.