Welcome to SIGNET, Munich!

The First of the Small Missions is Installed on SIGNET

"We are presently putting the Small Mission version of SIGNET through its paces and identifying bugs to be fixed with the system," says John Lang, Consul and Senior Trade Commissioner in Munich (and former Director of SIGNET Client Services). "From my experience using SIGNET at Headquarters, I appreciate SIGNET as a corporate tool, but on those days when the system doesn't work, the negative sociological impact of technology is discernable. I am confident, however, that we will soon be able to use SIGNET effectively and enjoyably."

In December 1994, Munich hosted the first Small Mission installation of SIGNET. This particular version of SIGNET was developed for sites with between 10 and 20 clients. Based on the "Windows for Workgroups" product, it was designed in response to a need to provide employees at small posts with a system that provides all of the functions of SIGNET used at Headquarters and at larger missions, but does not require a full-time System Administrator (SA) resident at the post. In the case of Munich, the SA is located in Bonn. From a client perspective, the environment looks the same as classic SIGNET.

"Small Mission SIGNET" provides the following:

- Full e-mail functionality using ICONDESK

- A MITNET telecommunications link

- A fax facility that allows the sending of faxes directly from the desk-top. A great feature for our colleagues in the trade program!

While small missions can access Other Government Departments (OGD's), at present they do not have access to Corporate Applications. This feature will be added in future updates.

The SIGNET Engineering Team is also developing a version of SIGNET for "micro" missions, those sites with less than 10 clients. We will talk about this version of SIGNET prior to its scheduled implementation toward the end of this fiscal year.

"No More Coffee Breaks with Icondesk 4.4!"

Continued from page 3

4.4 then creates the address list for you, using the list of surnames.

I do find that if I have a "Smith" or "Leblanc" on the list, 4.4 will produce a list of the Smiths or Leblancs, and asks which one I want — but if there's only one person of that surname on the system (as with "Eaton" or "Isfeld"), the message goes immediately. This also works with divisional acronyms and posts as well (though you still need to put a hyphen in front of acronyms). When I can't remember how to spell a name, the Query function and the lists are still available.

The filing system is nicely intuitive in 4.4. You have a window that shows you all your file folders at once, and you can create new folders as needed, and move files using the mouse. I find this encourages me to file things, instead of having a hundred assorted messages in my inbox. As well, the file folder turns red if you accept messages but don't read them, to alert you to read your mail.

If you write telexes with ICONDESK, and need to print them out for approvals, as we in geographics have to do, 4.4 will save you a couple of steps - just select Save, then Print, et, voila! a paper copy of the telex.

A paper saving feature of 4.4 is that when you print out a message, you have the option of printing just the message's text, without having to print a list of all the addressees.

But ICONDESK 4.4 is not perfect. The lack of clarity around the process of sending telexes continues to be very irritating. Should you type "immediate" at the top of urgent telexes, as well as selecting the "immediate delivery" option? The security level still has to be added to the top of every page by hand, and the security options checked off as well. And, of course, that a single spaced, non-capitalized e-mail message still doesn't "look" like a telex to older officers here at Headquarters is still a bother, even if posts receive the message in double spaced, all capitals form.

One other change that takes getting used to is that the "send window" of 4.4 is just a send "function" - if you push the "Exit" button to leave the "Send Window" (as you do in 4.3), you leave ICONDESK entirely! You can, instead, minimize "Send", or change windows, but it does take a little getting used to. Adding to the possible confusion is that Browse is still a separate window, and you have to use the "exit" button to leave it and return to the main Icondesk window.

All in all, though, I've found ICONDESK 4.4 a great step forward for DFAIT e-mail. I'm looking forward to the day when all our posts are finally on SIGNET!