Internet for All! — "Hey, Toto, We're Not in Kansas Anymore"
life *in* the era *of* information access

The recent announcement by the Information Management and Technology Bureau (SXD) of SIGNET access to the World Wide Web (WWW)[1] heralds the coming of a new era of information access for Department employees. This article will outline, in general terms, our view of what impact the Internet/Intranet will have on staff and what information source tools and services [2] are available to help all of us to become adept "surfers."

the Internet
a world of information online

The Internet is a global network of inter-connected networks which utilize a massive and fast communications infrastructure. It has been in existence in one form or another since 1969. Although the Internet provides many different services such as electronic mail and Gopher, it is the WWW that has captured the most attention in recent years. The WWW is regarded as the world's largest repository of information, as it is a collection of global networks accessible through the Internet by using web browser software such as Netscape.

SIGNET-D desktop access to the WWW gives us instant access to information databases in Canada and around the world. The range of information available includes the following broad areas of interest to the Department:

- Canadian government sites (federal, provincial, municipal)

- Government sites, at all levels, for other countries

- Libraries and academic institutions around the world

- News services from around the world

- Arts and cultural sites world-wide

- Companies, banks, and not-for-profit organizations

- WWW search sites

- Medical information databases

- Leisure and special interest sites

"Great!" you say, "but how do I find my way around?" Start by clicking on Netscape to access the DFAIT Intranet site. From this site, with a click of the mouse, you can access WWW news services (both local and international), other government institutions (Canadian and international), telephone directories (DFAIT, Federal Government, and Canada 411), and Internet search engines such as YAHOO!, LYCOS, Alta Vista, and others — all are very useful tools for searching the breadth of information available on the Internet.

the Intranet
corporate information online

Intranets are internal information resources utilizing Internet technology/interfaces to allow employees to access a breadth of corporate information. The DFAIT Intranet, one of four Internet-related projects that are part of the Department's strategic planning in the field of information management and technology, provides employees with access to up-to-date corporate information and documents. Simply put, the Intranet improves information flow within the organization so employees not only "have the ability to find relevant corporate information more quickly and easily, but can also employ their desktop applications to create, analyze and collaborate in new ways."

The DFAIT Intranet provides access to a dynamic source of internal information, including the following. Over time many of these documents will only be available electronically.

- CATS database (Corporate Automated Text Storage system - for unclassified or PROTECTED A corporate information)

- Training information sites (includes calendars)

- Human Resources Management Manual

- Various directives (e.g., Foreign Service and Travel)

- DFAIT Telephone Directory

- Departmental newsletters and administrative circular documents, such as *Connexions* and *Panorama*

- DFAIT Part III Estimates

Another important information source for the DFAIT WWW user is The DFAIT Research Page (DRP), which is accessible directly from the DFAIT sites button/link. A user-friendly research tool, the DRP offers a starting point and reference to hundreds of relevant sites on the Internet. It is a