Issue 1

January 1998

Is Technology

...lication featuring the technology of Maine State Government

Happy New Year!

WE'VE CHANGED OUR NAME FROM BIS NEWSLETTER TO MAINE I.S.TECHNOLOGY IN ORDER TO REFLECT A BROADER SCOPE OF INTEREST IN TECHNOLOGY USE WITHIN THE STATE OF MAINE. WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH OUR READERS ON HOW TECHNOLOGY IS HELPING YOU TO SOLVE PROBLEMS AND/OR GET YOUR WORK DONE. WE WILL ALSO GLADLY ACCEPT NOMINATIONS FOR THE NEWSLETTER EDITORIAL BOARD. BOARD MEMBERS HELP REPRESENT THEIR BUREAU OR AGENCY AND PROVIDE US WITH LEADS FOR ARTICLES. CONTACT MARION BOWMAN OR JANEY BARTON FOR MORE INFORMATION AT 287-3631.

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PEOPLE – OUR KEY ASSET

BY ROBERT MAYER

As in the past, the end of the year is an appropriate time to look at what BIS has accomplished and where we are going. This year I want to emphasize what we have done. As I said last year, our accomplishments are often overshadowed by the pace of our current activities. Take a minute with me to step back and reflect on the work we have done this year. I am enormously proud of it.

Many of the goals we set last year have become reality. Our performance indicators are published monthly. We are among a handful of agencies throughout state government to do this. It represents a very public commitment to service and I believe our customers notice it. We have signed service level agreements with our customers and the performance indicators back those up with demonstrated results. Our indicators are being used as a model for other agencies as they seek to publish similar indicators and manage their work accordingly.

We have held our first series of customer meetings and they will continue. The Help Desk is up and running and handling Level 1 support calls. The tracking and resolution of problems is much improved, as is our ability to provide customers with a single point of contact. Our ombudsman has successfully resolved several issues and is working to improve communication with our customers. I think we are seeing a change in our customers' perceptions of BIS and this is due, in large part, to our outreach efforts and our focus on delivering a quality service.

The installation of voice mail and e-mail continues, although it appears the pace is slowing. We now have over 7,000 e-mail addresses and about 6,500 voice mail boxes. We have incorporated these tools into our daily life so successfully, that we cannot work without them. For BIS this means a heightened emphasis on reliability.

Network Services has completed an assessment of our wide area network and is now working on systematic improvements. These include increasing the available bandwidth, introducing more segmentation and routing, and extending the network's reach. Our dial-up customers now have local or toll free access to the network from anywhere in the state. The establishment of the telecenters for the Department of Labor taught us about using telecommunications to provide better service to the citizens. Our compressed video facilities and the ATM network are making teleconferencing routine. The transformation we have seen over the last year has moved

state government into a modern telecommunications environment. Over the next year, these technologies will have a significant impact on the way that state government conducts its business.

Process improvements continue in Production Services. We have successfully migrated most users to electronic forms, saving a significant amount of money on printing and warehousing costs. The IBM mainframe is ready to be tested as an enterprise server and the progress toward eliminating older software continues. With the installation of an uninterruptible power source and completion of a business continuity plan, we will have made significant progress toward the creation of a model production facility. What was once an operations center, focused on the mainframes, has now become one of our fastest growing and most diverse lines of business. Our production center is a full service organization, providing 24 hour support services to an increasing number of servers, consulting with customers on post-processing procedures, and offering creative solutions to a variety of business problems.

Over the last year, there has been no shortage of work for Development Services. The success of the Office of GIS on the E911 project has led to a major expansion and extension of that contract. Managers throughout state government now have access to current information on finances through the use of the Financial Warehouse. We continue to deploy new systems, using a client/server architecture, at several departments, including the Public Utilities Commission. Our expertise in databases and application development is in constant demand.

Movement to a standard desktop configuration has started. Once this is in place, we should see dramatic improvements in user support services across state government.

Completing the integration of all wide area network connections and routinizing the installation and support of the desktop are two necessary precursors to creating the infrastructure to deliver standard applications to desktops anywhere in the state. We are well along in creating that infrastructure. That, in turn, will pave the way for improving the state's return on its investment in technology.

To continue this work over the coming year, we need to focus on the reliability of our infrastructure. We must make improvements to our network to build in redundancy and expand the available bandwidth. We must cooperate on support of the regional state offices through the use of shared staff and central dispatching. It is time to incorporate newer telecommunications technologies, like ATM, into our network. Productivity tools like e-mail, must be available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

While it is not a glamorous task, we must complete our work on preparing all of our systems for the new millennium. The Year 2000 remediation work has begun on several major systems. Other systems will be replaced before the turn of the century. With that work in progress, we must turn our attention to the testing phase. We will work on setting up a certification process to test all applications in a protected environment to ensure that we will be ready for the Year 2000. We are also working closely with our federal government counterparts to make sure the exchange of information between federal and state systems will continue uninterrupted.

Finally, and most importantly, we must step up our efforts to nurture and grow our human resources. People are our key asset, and are at risk just as much as our systems. The knowledge base and dedication in our staff

must be preserved. The careerbanding project is well underway and I hope it will provide an important tool as we look for ways to improve our working environment. With broad career bands, job opportunities will increase. Flexible salary bands will allow compensation to track work and skills better. Over the last year, we have been pushing to do more training. While there has been some success in this area, I am not convinced we have done enough. As our infrastructure evolves, our training needs will increase. Finding a way to stay current with technology and our profession will be a major challenge for us over the coming year.

I am proud of what the bureau has accomplished this year. We live in one of the most demanding technical environments in the state. Even with the pressures of tight resources and constantly changing needs, we have been able to deliver an extraordinary level of service to our customers and the citizens of the state. And I expect the next year will provide us with new ways to prove our expertise and demonstrate the value technology offers.
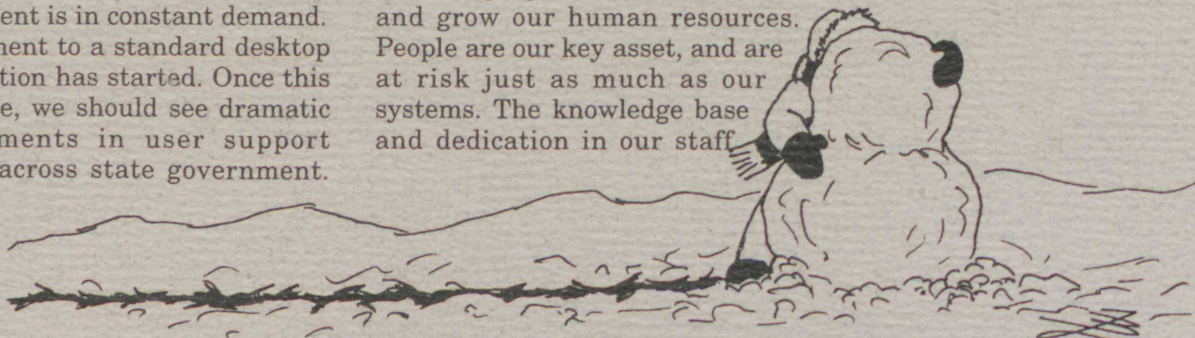
Robert Mayer is Chief Information Officer for the state of Maine.

> "The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor."
> -- Vince Lombardi
>
> - - -
>
> "We relish the news of our heroes forgetting that we are extraordinary to someone too."
> -- Helen Hayes

What's In A Name - Maine Revenue Services

By Rory McQuillan

I'll have two eggs over easy, toast and coffee, and, by the way, deduct the tab from my income tax refund. While this scenario isn't likely soon, Maine Revenue Services is poised to make dealing with state government easier for both the public and state employees.

Maine Revenues Services (the former Bureau of Taxation) has made a substantial investment in data processing technology in recent years, and is ready to serve state goverment needs beyond the administration of taxes. A little background is in order. In 1991, the Bureau of Taxation purchased Tax Administration Software from Andersen Consulting and began customizing the Maine Automated Tax System (MATS). MATS has two primary features which lend itself to flexibility of application: data is stored on a DB2 relational database and all input forms are developed via the Forms Definition Facility (FDF). FDF uses a Lotus spreadsheet driven process to define a form, such as an individual tax return (e.g. - 1997 1040 Long Form), in terms of the salient characteristics of each line on the form: data type—quantity, amount, text, or date, and a "special indicator" denoting the primary attribute of the line, such as net income or total tax, resulting in a COBOL Working-Storage layout. While FDF performs several other functions, such as due date determination and relational edits, the data description function allows various form types to be processed through a common front end. In 1995, the Bureau purchased scanning and imaging software from IBM, and began development of the Maine Image Processing System (MIPS) for data capture and retrieval. MIPS uses a variety of state-of-the-art software and hardware tools, including optical storage, REXX for OS2, C++, DB2 for OS2, DB2 for AIX, client-server methodologies, and interfaces to the mainframe.

For the upcoming tax season, we are offering taxpayers the option of ordering up to three state park passes on their tax return. The purchase requests are made on the new Contributions and Purchases schedule (Schedule CP) on the 1997 1040 form. The taxpayer indicates up to three passes, which may be either Individual passes at $20 or Vehicle passes at $40 each. The taxpayer also indicates the name and address(es) of the pass recipient(s). The FDF edit module will ensure that the passes register the proper prices, and all totals add up. If discrepancies exist, returns will suspend for manual review.

Purchase request data will be stored in a new DB2 table, and will be used to print the passes and will be available for retrieval by MATS users. The financial processing modules of MATS will evaluate the taxpayers purchase requests, and approve them if the account has sufficent funds. If three passes are requested and only two can be funded, those two will be issued and the third will be denied, with a rejection letter explaining the situation. Park passes will be printed at BIS and sent directly to the recipients, with a line identifying the purchaser. The taxpayer's account will show Purchase Requests and Purchases as distinct transaction types, along with a status of "approved", "pending", or "denied"; and Purchases will show a financial effect similar to a refund.

If you frequent our state parks and will have a refund coming for 1997, please consider ordering passes when you file your return. Who knows, maybe next year you'll receive an L.L. Bean catalog with your 1040 form in the mail!

Rory is a senior programmer/analyst with Maine Revenue Services.

> "There are no menial jobs, only menial attitudes."
> --William Bennett

Challenge

By Lester Dickey

Challenge: This problem appeared in a recent issue of the Headset Gazette, a publication for the customer services group at CMP. Determine the unique digital values of the letters "M", "A", "T", and "H" in the multiplication. Obviously, neither "M" nor "H" are zero.

$$\begin{array}{r} MATH \\ \times 4 \\ \hline HTAM \end{array}$$

Hint: M must be either 1 or 2, since 4 x M is a single digit.

Please e-mail **Lester Dickey** with your answer and your name, phone number, and the organization for which you work. Or call **Barbara Buck** at **287-3631**. The winner will be drawn from all the correct entries and will receive a **FREE** pizza from **Pat's Pizza**. All answers must be in no later than the **12th** of the month.

Last month's challenge brought 33 correct responses, and the winner, by random drawing, is **Jody Breton** of **Corrections**.

1. Deck the Halls With Boughs of Holly fa la la la la la la la la la
2. I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Clause Underneath the Mistletoe Last Night
3. Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer
4. All I Want for Christmas is my Two Front Teeth
5. I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas Just Like the Ones I Used to Know
6. It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas
7. I'll Be Home for Christmas
8. Frosty the Snowman was a Jolly Happy Soul
9. Jingle Bell Jingle Bell Jingle Bell Rock
10. I'll Have a Blue Christmas Without You

Even though Elvis recorded several of the above, the one he made famous was the last, "I'll Have a Blue Christmas Without You."
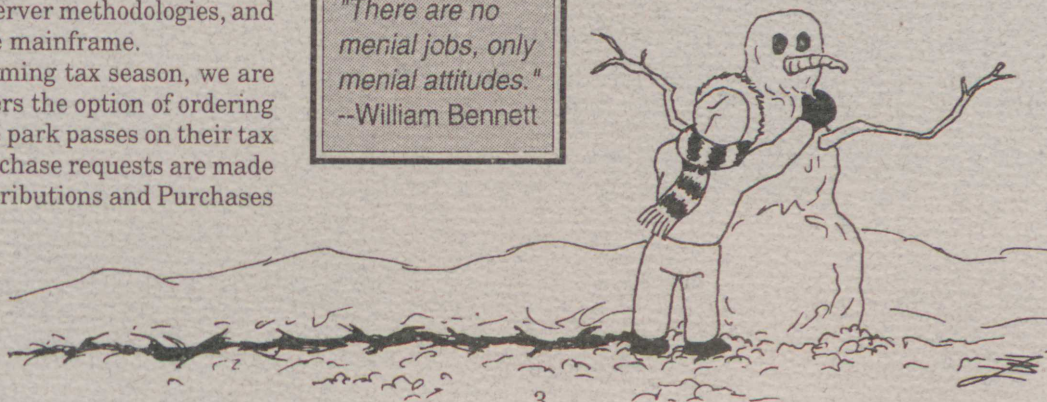
Careerbanding Project Update

By Glenda Winn

The IS/IT careerbanding project will take into consideration IS/IT occupations throughout State Government and will be piloted in the Bureau of Information Services. If careerbanding proves to be successful on a pilot basis, it is anticipated that it will be implemented on a statewide basis. Additionally, the lessons learned from IS/IT careerbanding may lead to careerbanding initiatives in other occupations in State Government.

The pilot project's steering committee continued its research into the application of careerbanding and similar strategies. These included the MSCALES project which introduced careerbanding (broadbanding) into the Information Technology Department at the University of Michigan. This project is of interest because it was driven by ongoing cultural and organizational changes that would lead to a more competitive, customer-focused, environment with the ability to respond quickly to customer needs. MSCALES has three key components that were developed within the context of the existing system: broadbanding, compensation reform, and professional development. More information on MSCALES can be found at http://cause-www.colorado.edu/information-resources/ir-library/abstracts/cnc9643.html.

Other careerbanding examples reviewed were from the states of Iowa and California. The State of California has several pilot projects (or "demonstrations") that are trying careerbanding type strategies in several departments, with varying degrees of success and complexity.

Watson Wyatt & Company has been contracted to provide subject matter expertise to the careerbanding project. Their role is to guide us, and to provide objective feedback to help us see the forest for the trees. Much of the hands on work of design, working through issues, and implementation will be our responsibility.

In late November and early December, consultants from Watson Wyatt conducted focus group sessions and individual interviews to get a sense of who we are, how others might perceive us, what we think about careerbanding so far, and what issues exist that may or may not be addressed through the careerbanding project.

There were three focus groups of BIS employees, another focus group for ISMG members and one for BIS customers. There was also a session for IS staff in other agencies that was coordinated with MSEA. The consultants from Watson Wyatt also conducted individual interviews with Chuck Hewett (Chief Operating Officer), Janet Waldron (Commissioner, Department of Administrative and Financial Services), Bob Mayer (Chief Information Officer), Ken Walo (Director, Bureau of Employee Relations), Don Wills (Director, Bureau of Human Resources), Jack Nicholas (State Budget Officer), and Carl Leinonen (Executive Director of MSEA).

The results were shared and discussed with the project's steering and oversight committees. The major issues that were identified fell into four broad categories: leadership, communications and understanding, cultural environment, and administrative processes. Watson Wyatt will use the information they collected from the focus groups and individual interviews, plus the discussion with the steering and oversight committees, to finalize their report on the issues that face us. They will also prepare a gap analysis report which will document where we are today, and where we want to be as a result of this project.

After hearing discussion from the Information Services Managers' Group (ISMG) and focus group results, the steering committee invited the ISMG to send one of their members to sit in on steering committee meetings. The ISMG member will offer the steering committee another perspective on issues facing the pilot project and will provide a strong communications link between the ISMG and the project's steering committee.

As you can see we are still very much in the research and fact finding phase. Plans for the coming month include completing our research to choose or modify a model that we think might work for us. Then the real work will begin in February with the start of the project's design phase. So it is important to note that there is no design or plan being discussed at this time. That type of work and discussion will begin in February.

Meanwhile Carmen Fournier and I will be busy bringing the web page for the careerbanding project up to date. A lot of information has been collected that we want to share with you. If you have any questions or comments regarding this project, please contact me or any one of the steering committee members.

Visit the Careerbanding web site at http://only.state.me.us/bis/careerbanding

> "People often find themselves achieving victories that have come at the expense of things they suddenly realized were valuable to them. People from every walk of life often struggle to achieve a higher income, more recognition, or professional compentence, only to find that their drive blinded them to things that really mattered."
>
> -- Stephen Covey

ArcServe FAQ for PC Users

By Joy Elwell

This is new documentation which is now given to all newly attached Network PC users as part of their orientation to BIS Backup procedures within the State Office Building.

Q: What is the PC Backup Jobs rotation? When does my PC get backed up?

A: Incremental Backups are run Monday - Thursday starting at 18:00 and ending around 22:00. A Full Backup is done on Friday night starting at 18:00 and ending around 10:00 Sunday. Incremental cartridges are saved for four weeks. Weekly cartridges are saved for five weeks. The last Friday of the month is the Monthly backup and this cartridge is saved off site for one year. Zeus Mail is backed up every Saturday and is saved off site for one year. The first Sunday of the month we purge any Zeus Mail that is older then 60 days. Only in a extreme situation will we do a restore on purged mail.

Q: What do I need to do to get my PC backed up?

A: When you get ready to leave for the night. Exit and sign out of all applications. If your mail in on the server it will not get backed up unless you Exit and sign out of mail. If something is left open it will not get backed up. Power saver must be turned off. When all you have running is Windows 95 turn off your monitor leave your PC on and you are ready to leave. OR Exit and sign off all applications, click on start, click on shutdown, click on Close all programs and sign on as a different user. DO NOT SIGN ON. Turn off monitor and leave. When you come in the next day turn on monitor and sign on. By doing either version you are not booting your PC.

Q: How do I protect others against getting into my PC system, when I leave it on all the time?

A: You should have a screen saver password or a power up password set on.

Q: How will I know if my PC was backed up or not?

A: E-Mail is sent out from ArcServe daily letting you know if you were not backed up. Also there is a file on your C: drive named Agenterr.log. You can view this log and find out how much data was backed up and when.

Q: If I need a PC restore done, what do I do?

A: Contact the Help Desk (624-7700). They will send the Problem Ticket (with your information included) to the Operations Floor where it will be taken care of. You will be notified. There is also a mail id (ArcServe Backup) for you to send E-Mail to us on any questions that you may have or to request Restore Jobs. (TIP: For a Restore Job we need to know the entire path (Directory, Sub-directory, Folder Name), File Name and the Restore date (file date) you wish.

Q: If I get a new PC and/or upgrade my old PC, do I need to let you know?

A: Yes. The night before your new PC is installed let ArcServe know of your plans. Most people like to get a full backup the night before. Just in case something goes wrong and they need to restore the system or just some files. If you receive a new PC or a new network card or have Windows 95 reinstalled, you need to send us a note. Your PC will then be checked and we will make sure that all the settings and your ID number are fine. ArcServe uses your network card serial number for your PC identification number.

Q: If I am going to be out of the office for any length of time should I let someone know?

A: Yes, if you are going to have your PC turned off for a week or more, send a note to mail ID ArcServe. We will then mark you as out on vacation and will not send out an E-Mail.

Q: How long can my file names be?

A: Your file name can only be 32 characters long.

Joy Elwell is a senior computer operator in the Production Services Division of BIS.

Is It Accessible?

By Floyd White

In the past few years technology has expanded so quickly that it's difficult to even comprehend as software users and developers, let alone keep up with. Windows 95 and the like have made what seems to be impossible just a mouse click or two away. But wait a minute. What if someone who has been doing work for some time using a text based system and assistive visual software, like a screen reader, is suddenly faced with an upgrade to that application that doesn't work with that software anymore. In some cases you could call it new technology in reverse.

Why doesn't it work anymore? Many developers write very pretty applications, with nice visual graphical screens, without the awareness that there may be somebody that needs that application, who can't see it very well. For example, if you're using or developing an application that can't be navigated through without a mouse, that's a problem. Why? Because screen reading software needs text to interpret and read out loud. This certainly doesn't mean that all that visual beauty has to be eliminated. Many applications could be made accessible simply by putting a text label on a graphic button or icon and allowing the tab key to move from one function to the next. The major stumbling block to applications that are not screen reader accessible is *awareness*. Since many of the application developers have little trouble seeing what's on the screen, they have never thought about alternative methods for use.

As a member of the committee charged with developing a set of guidelines for application development and software acquisition, that's where we come in. Representatives from the Division For The Blind and Visually Impaired, The Maine Center For The Blind and Visually Impaired, Maine Cite, and various other state agencies have formulated guidelines to raise awareness and assist people with the issues just mentioned. We have submitted guidelines to the ISMG and hopefully with their approval will be passed on to the ISPB for adoption very soon.

Why should you care? No one you know has this problem? Because there may be someone you don't know about that may someday need to use that application. Maybe some federal monies you expect may depend on your system being accessible, or maybe it makes your system available to all people. Think of it this way. Most buildings nowadays are built hopefully with a wheelchair ramp, so that individuals can get into the building. Making your system accessible builds a ramp for all people to get to the universe.

Floyd B. White is a senior programmer/analyst in Development Services at the Bureau of Information Services.

InforME: Information Resources of Maine

By Rebecca Wyke & Mary Cloutier

The Legislature will be considering a bill entitled "An Act Creating the InforME Public Information Act to Ensure Access to Electronic Public Records" in the upcoming session. To help legislators and others understand InforME, two free seminars are being planned for January 7 and 8, 10:30 am to noon in the Washington Room of the Augusta Civic Center. The same material will be presented both days to accommodate as many schedules as possible.

The speakers will be: Jeff Fraser, General Manager of the Information Network of Kansas, Harry Herington, General Manager of Georgia Net and Dr. Harlan Onsrud, Associate Professor in the Department of Spatial Information Science and Engineering at the University of Maine and research scientist with the National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis (NCGIA). Dr. Onsrud's research focuses on (1) analysis of legal and institutional issues affecting the creation and use of digital databases and the sharing of geographic information, (2) assessing utilization of GIS and the social impacts of the technology, and (3) developing and assessing strategies for supporting the diffusion of geographic information innovations.
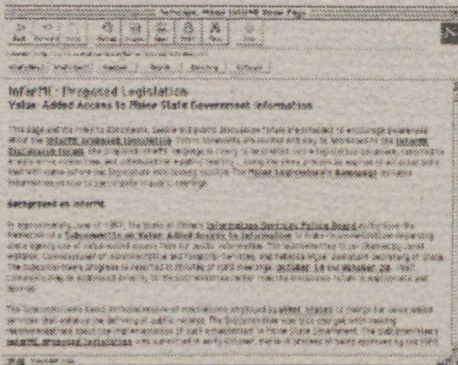
InforME, whose purpose is to serve as a self-supporting and cost-effective electronic gateway to provide and enhance access to public information stored in electronic form, adopts the model in operation in Kansas and Georgia. See *http://www.spatial.maine.edu/harlan/informe/infmehom.htm* for an extensive background information, text of the bill and a discussion forum. To our knowledge, this is the first time in Maine draft legislation has been posted on a website for anyone to read and make comment!

Definition of Need

Today's electronic society demands a more responsive approach to accessing public information. Many of the State's databases which contain public information are not currently accessible to the public via electronic means. State agencies often lack the resources to invest in technologies that will provide electronic access. Agencies that do make information available electronically lack a standardized means of access, which places a burden on the public user.

Management

InforME will not require State funds to implement. InforME will be managed via a public/private partnership by contracting with a private network manager. The network manager makes the investment in technology necessary to capture the data and make the information available to the public. The network manager must insure that technology used by State agencies conforms to current State standards. State agencies determine the nature and cost of the information that will be offered via InforME through individual contracts with the network manager known as "service level agreements." The network manager will make its profit by charging fees for premium services it develops. Premium services are enhancements to information that is otherwise available through InforME for the statutory fee or at no charge.

Oversight

A board of 13 voting and 4 nonvoting members will oversee the services offered by InforME and supervise the performance of the network manager. Voting members include the Secretary of State and the Commissioners of three other departments that are major data custodians; the Director of the Bureau of Information Services; the State Librarian; and representatives of the University of Maine System, the Maine Municipal Association, a citizen access group, the library system and 3 user associations. Nonvoting members include representatives of the Legislative and Judicial branches and the CEO of the network manager. *Note: because the board will approve service fees through rulemaking, the Legislative and Judicial Branch representatives are constitutionally prohibited from possessing voting rights.*

User Fees

Most of the information available through InforME will be either free of charge or available for the statutorily prescribed fee. Revenue streams for State agencies will remain intact as the network manager will collect any statutory fees and transmit them to the appropriate agency. Users who want to purchase the premium services will subscribe for those services directly with the network manager.

State Agency Participation

Any State agency may contract with the network manager to provide access to electronic public information. The Legislative and Judicial Branches, municipalities and nonprofit membership organizations may also choose to voluntarily participate. The advantage to data custodians of participating in InforME is increased public access to electronic data in a standardized user friendly format without a substantial investment of resources.

Rebecca Wyke, Assistant Secretary of State is a member of the ISPB, and, with Commissioner Janet Waldron, co-chaired the ISPB subcommittee which drafted the InforME legislation. Mary N. Cloutier is staff to the ISPB, and also is a member of the subcommittee.

Tips!
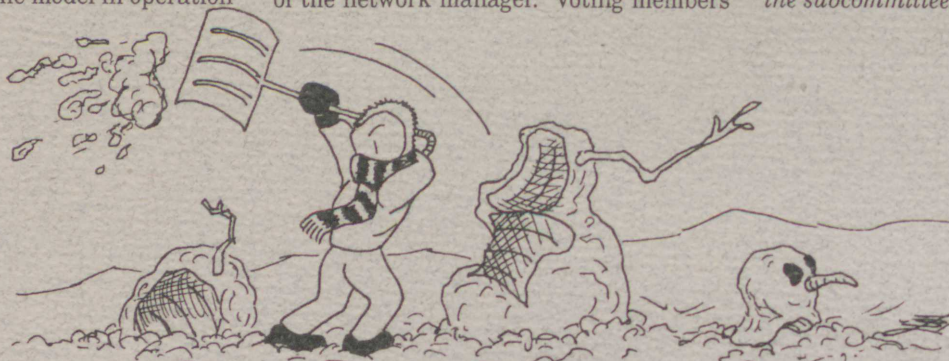
Versions of the Lotus SmartSuite (Keeping Your Sanity96 and Sanity97!)

By Tom Driscoll

Recently, many of us have been moving from whatever wordprocessing package we used to use to the state standard Lotus Wordpro. Currently there's two versions, WordPro96 and WordPro97. WordPro97 works both in Windows 3.1 (the old windows) and Windows95 machines. WordPro 96 only works in Windows 95.

We are aiming towards having everyone on the same platform. When we get there, then we can migrate forward to new versions together.

We've all experienced "version" problems, like, "somebody sent me a WordPro97.lwp and I have WordPro96.lwp and I can't open it!!!" This is a genuine problem; but be aware that it is not a Lotus issue only. Even if we all had Word or WordPerfect or Yourfavoritewordprocessor97, we'd have similar issues.

Some solutions to the "versioning" issue.

- *MIGRATE IN GROUPS*

Move towards having the same version, by workgroup. Example, all of the Forest Fire Control (FFC) Regions and District computers were migrated to the SmartSuite97 at the same time. This is important to FFC because they primarily share documents with each other.

- *WORK AT THE LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR*

Know what versions exist within your primary circle of electronic correspondence. And then, SAVE your documents to the "lowest common denominator". Example, the Parks came online with WordPro97, but the regional offices had WordPro96. For a while there was a mismatch. The Parks could read both the 96 and the 97; but, if the Parks saved as the default 97 and sent the document to the Region, the region couldn't open the 96 in the 97. (following that???). The solution is for the "workgroup" to agree to all "save as" to the WordPro96 format until everyone is up to "parity".

- *COPY AND PASTE TEXT FROM WORDPROCESSOR INTO E-MAIL*

COPY and PASTE from your wordprocessor to cc:Mail without making an attachment. Sometimes a document is very simple and doesn't need to be distributed in cc:Mail as an attachment. So, regardless if it is Word Pro, WordPerfect, Word, or Yourfavoritewordprocessor97, you can COPY and PASTE directly to cc:Mail. This is a VERY GOOD way to work, as anyone with ANY e-mail can read your message. Look ma, no version problem. E-mail text like this can be read by cc:Mail, MSMail, HotMail, Eudora, AppleMacMail or whatever. Get it?

Last comment: Sounds harsh, but "get used to it". The "versioning" issue will be with us for a long long time. As we gain "parity" at work, we also continue to exchange documents with more and more people outside of DCN and the State. They inevitably will be on a different standard. So, even if we could all magically be exactly the same at DCN, the computing world around us will always be different, and require us to "convert" between competing products.

Just wait until Microsoft markets Windows 98. Then well have Wordpro97 on 98, 96 on 98, 96 on 95, and 97 on 95. We'll try to keep the group together on the hike, but inevitably we'll get spread out a bit, some ahead, some behind, and some stragglers. The advice in this column may help you to keep your computer sanity.

Tom Driscoll is a member of the IS staff at the Department of Conservation.

Introduction to Oracle8 - New Products?

By Jim Lopatosky

During the latter half of 1997, Oracle Corporation began distributing the latest version of its flagship product: Oracle8. This is a major release for Oracle, introducing many new features while stretching the limits of the existing functionality. Over the next few months, we will review what Oracle8 brings to developers and database administrators. Specifically in this article, we will highlight what sound like new products from Oracle, but are simply just new product names Oracle has graced us with. Yes, just when we figured out what SQL*Net and Relational Databases were, Oracle went and renamed them.

To start off with, Oracle is no longer *just* a Relational DataBase Management System (RDBMS). The new term is Object Relational DataBase Management System (ORDBMS), which is to signify the addition of object-oriented concepts in the product. Not to worry, all of the relational concepts still exist, and your application should work as it always did when you migrate to Oracle8. However, you will now have the ability to build the new generation of applications. Along the same lines, Oracle has realigned its packaging scheme for the ORDBMS. Oracle Workgroup Server has been renamed to Oracle Server, while the original Oracle Server was renamed to Oracle Enterprise Server.

Another product name change is with Oracle's network communications product: SQL*Net. With version 8, it is shipped as Net8. Everything still works as it always does, with minor performance improvements.

The last changes we'll mention are really not naming changes, just dramatic jumps in version numbers: many jump from 2.x or 3.x to 8.0. For example, SQL*Plus jumps from version 3.x to 8.0. Other products for which this happens to includes Oracle Call Interface (OCI), Pro*C and Pro*Cobol Precompilers, PL/SQL. Oddly enough, Server Manager, the replacement for SQL*DBA, went from version 2.x to version 3.0. I guess not everybody is consistent.

These are not all of the name changes that Oracle has made. Rather, these are the changes for the more common products. As always, consult your Oracle documentation for a complete list.

Jim Lopatosky is a senior database analyst with the Development Services Division of BIS.
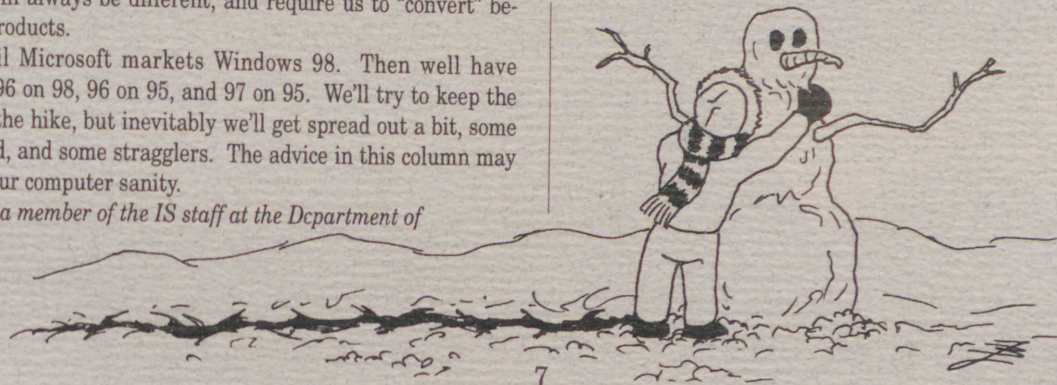
Programmer . . . Joni MacDonald

By Nancy Davis

The search for a challenging position was what brought Joni MacDonald to State government and the BIS Development Services group. She is six months into her job as a programmer and finds that she enjoys the variety of the work and the self-management aspect of the job. Joni comes to BIS from St. Joseph's Hospital in Bangor where she worked for nine months on the Help Desk and did RPG programming. She answered customer questions on computer software and hardware. She also assisted in the setup of the AS510 IBM mainframe. Joni says this mainframe is uniquely black in color and takes up less space than other mainframe computers. Setting up PCs and terminals for customer use was also a part of the job.

Joni enjoys attending customer meetings and interacting with customers when doing demos on equipment. All of the individuals in her Development Services group, work as a team on the same project, each having a specific piece of the project. Bill Hodges, project leader, assigns the tasks and the team members meet to discuss progress and status on each project.

Some programming projects are small, simple, one day assignments. Other large, more complex projects may require 2-3 weeks of programming to develop all of the options, menus, or forms that the customer has requested.

Joni has already worked on several projects since joining the development team. Using Oracle, a programming language, she has programmed reports and forms for the Bureau of Elections, and she has converted labels from a laser to dot matrix printer. She also programmed a labels report/service list for the Public Utilities Commission. This will be used to send out consumer advocate reports on Maine citizens' complaints to the PUC regarding telephone companies, hydro companies, and other utility businesses around the state.

Currently, Joni is programming a conversion from an old docket's database into a new relational database. The new database will store dockets as well as establish links to data related to the docket (phases, links, etc.) case. Joni will use SQL, structured query language, to complete these latest assignments.

Joni, husband Aaron, and 3 year old Kirsten, reside in Augusta. They moved here from Bangor to take jobs that they considered more challenging. They like to tell Kirsten that she "works" at the Y where she goes for daycare. That makes her feel like she is working too. Not a bad premise to develop at an early age.

If you have an opportunity, stop by and welcome Joni to BIS.

Transitions

JoAnn McElvaine has joined BIS as a systems analyst with the MFASIS Budget team.

David Coons has joined BIS as a data communication technician with the data networking section (Bob Corum's group). Dave had worked for the Department of Labor.

Peter Lugner has joined BIS as a communication technician with the voice section (Dave Rodrigue's group). Peter had worked for Telecom.

Elizabeth Jacques has joined BIS as a data communication customer assistance coordinator with the Help Desk. Elizabeth had worked for the Bureau of Accounts & Control.

Floyd White has been selected by BIS to fill a vacant senior programmer/analyst position with the Development Services division.

Shirley Winchenbach has left BIS and state service to work for L. L. Bean.

Mary Silva has left BIS and state service to work for Associated Grocers.

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