Offline prints

Most users of commercial host organisations have the possibility of obtaining substantial quantities of off-line prints at reasonably short notice. This type of service is undoubtedly useful for obtaining information from large databases which are costly to access and infrequently updated. Given however that the vast majority of ECHO's databases are not only fairly small in size but are also accessible free of charge, ECHO has decided for cost-effective reasons to limit its offline print service to a small number of files only. In future offline prints will be limited to the following databases:

EABS
BIOREP
TED ARCHIVE
(0.5 ECU per record)
THESAURI

We apologize in advance for any inconvenience caused.

Who are your fellow users of ECHO?

In ECHO News 4/1989 ECHO aksed you for your help in order to know about your fellow users of ECHO.

ECHO would like to thank all those who have filled in the questionnaire (the response was really overwhelming) and at the same time we would like to ask the ECHO users who had not yet time to fill in this little questionnaire to do so and help us.

We promise to let you know in one of the forthcoming ECHO News who are your fellow users.

Please help us!

FESTIVE GREETINGS!

The entire ECHO team would like to take this opportunity of wishing all Users a very joyful Christmas and a prosperous and successful 1990.

If you have not yet received a copy of ECHO's new 1990 wall-chart calender then please get in contact with the Help-desk immediately whilst stocks last!

TED corner

Part A)
New Fax service for TED!

Yet another automatic business opportunity warning system will be available shortly to all users as ECHO prepares to launch its new 'TED-FAX' service.

Future subscribers to the TED fax service will receive directly by fax selected notices of public contracts of interest to their organisations on the morning of their publication.

The notices will be selected on the basis of a number of keywords corresponding to activity profile of the organisati o n   i n question; classification codes identifying the type of products or services supplied; the country or countries of interest; the tendering procedure etc.. All notices will be sent out automatically in accordance with the instructions laid down by the User, i.e. in either the abbreviated, summary, or full-text version of the document.

Technical testing of the service is due to commence towards the end of 1989 with a new Siemens software product entitled 'Oasis'. The service should hopefully be operational during the first quarter of 1990. Further details will be published in the forthcoming issue of Echonews.

Part B)
Coming soon — New 'Menu' version of TED

New menu-guided versions of TED in both english and french are due to enter into a 'test-phase' shortly and will hopefully be available to all Users during the first quarter of 1990.

Part C)
Software changes for TED file

In order to facilitate access to the TED file, some software changes have been studied over the past year and were finally implemented on the 1st September 1989. Before the new software version became operational, daily production of the file was carried out using both the new and existing software in parallel until final tests concluded that a switch over to the new more 'user-friendly' version was acceptable.

The new software offers more search possibilities to the User, some of which are out-lined below:

1) New output format available with 'ABSTRACT (AB)' field

As you already know, both the 'title' field and 'paragraph 3b' of a tender document i.e. TD=3 are now freetext searchable in all available languages of the TED file.

Up until recently however it was not possible to view 'only' the information contained within paragraph 3b with the SHOW command. We are now happy to announce that this problem has been solved following the creation of a new field called 'ABSTRACT (AB)'.

Users may now enter the following output command in order to view information from both the 'title' and 'abstract' (i.e. paragraph 3b) fields of a tender document at the same time:

```
show r=1;f=ti;ab
1.00/000001 ECHO: -TED /
COPYRIGHT ECHO
TI: UK-Birmingham: water
supply works
AB: Works: The supply,
delivery, installation, testing
and commissioning of flume
with ultrasonic flow
measurement; primary
sedimentation tank automatic
desludging unit; stormwater
return pumping unit; three
hydraulically driven bacteria
bed rotary distributors;
valves, penstocks and
actuators; electrical control
equipment.
*END*
?
```
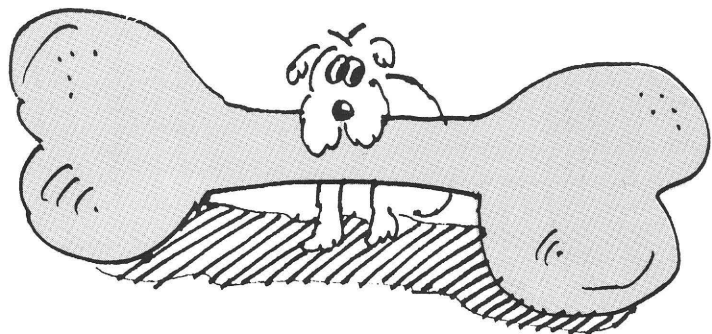
2) Matching-up published tenders with their corresponding 'annexes' or 'corrections'

It is now possible to match-up a tender document with its corresponding annex or correction (should they exist) by adopting a very simple and straightforward procedure.

In the past it was only possible to know of the existance of an annex or correction to a tender document by entering in one of the following output commands:

SHOW F=ALL or,
SHOW F=TEXT.

Likewise, for 'Document Types' TD=1 (Correction to an Invitation to Tender) and TD= 2 (Addition to an Invitation to

Tender) a rather cumbersome procedure often had to be undertaken in order to locate the original tender document.

In order to solve the above-mentioned problems the following software changes have now been implemented:

a) To find out rapidly if a tender document has a corresponding annex or corrections without having to view through the entire text of the document, simply enter the following SHOW command:
SHOW F=CNT (correction notes)

b) 'Document Types' TD=1 and TD=2 now contain reference information to the original document number.
e.g. REFERENCED ND: XXXXX

This information may also be located with the following output command:
SHOW F=RF

EXAMPLE:

In preparing a bid for a published tender you may wish to check if an annex or correction exists for the tender in question. Below are the steps that you should follow:
1) Enter BASE TD92
2) FIND TD=(1 or 2)
3) SHOW F=RF
Now look through the list of documents numbers. If your tender document number has been listed then, enter:
SHOW R=«number»
or,
1) FIND ND=XXXXXX
2) SHOW F=CNT

ERRATUM (Echonews no. 4/1989)
1) Article: Ted Corner (Part A)
The Grips command for changing from one language version to another (e.g. german) should have read as follows:
DEF TL=GERM; FL=GERM.
2) Question Mark:
The main title should have been:
'Advanced access to information:
Formulating queries in natural language.'
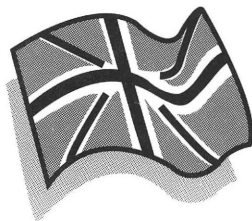

ECHO Videos now available

Three new videos are now available providing information on the different aspects of the ECHO service.

As mentioned in Echonews no. 3/1989, two of the videos (i.e. the 'short' (10 minutes) and 'extended' (16 minutes) versions) will be used to promote the European Commission Host Organisation and will highlight the advantages of going online and of using the Commond Command Language. The third video (15 minutes in length is geared towards potential users of the Tenders Electronic Daily (TED) database.

All videos are available in five language versions (English, French, German, Italian and Greek) and cost 15 ECU each.

Why not order your copies now by filling out the reply coupon page 6!

London user meeting

ECHO is to host its first UK 'User Meeting' at the International Online Meeting (IOLIM) to be held in London on the 13th December 1989. The User meeting will be open both to regular Echo users and friends of the European Commission Host Organisation and will provide information on ECHO's future plans and projects.

The meeting is scheduled to be held between 11h00 and 13h00 at the Novote Hammersmith Int. Centre, Salon «Muscadet».

If you are interested in attending and would like to receive further details concerning the agenda, please contact the ECHO Help-desk.

Introducing 'Database News Corner'

ECHO is to introduce yet another new section to its newsletter entitled 'Database News Corner'. As the name would indicate this column will provide up to date information on the databases of the European Information Services Market.

Details concerning the upgrading of databases, the introduction, withdrawal or modification of files, and the availability of new types of information services will be provided. The main information source for the above will be the invaluable DIANEGUIDE file available on ECHO.

The first 'Database News Corner' will appear in the forthcoming issue of Echonews.

Menu guided files

As mentioned in previous issues of Echonews, ECHO has been developing menu-guided experimental versions of a selection of its databases in order to facilitate access for those users that perhaps do not have a basic knowledge of our retrieval language (CCL).

Dianeguide:
The menu version of the DIANEGUIDE database is currently available in English and French only (other language versions will follow shortly).

Ted:
A new menu version of TED is currently being tested and should be available during the 1st quarter of 1990. The database will initially be offered in French and English only.

Brokersguide:
A menu version of the BROKERSGUIDE file is currently in preparation and should be available shortly.

QM
QUESTION MARK

Advanced access to information: Formulating queries in 'spoken language'

Communication with computers and databases is an essential element in todays modern information society. With the advent of 1992, the European Commission is actively involved in creating novel and easy-to-access information services in order to prepare for the challenges of the single European Market. In this issues Questionmark we would like to describe briefly a new CEC financed project which involves the creation of a user-friendly voice input/output 'man-machine' interface.

New ECHO service:

Current information systems and sources are often complex and difficult to manage and usually require the involvement of technical experts who are familiar with one or several retrieval languages and who are accustomed to using terminals in order to perform their queries. Accessing databases has therefore remained a task mainly for information professionals.

In the past, ECHO developed the Common Command Language (CCL) in order to overcome some of the above-mentioned difficulties, but even so, before potential users could access the databases of interest to them they were still obliged 1) to learn the CCL and 2) to use computer equipment. Realizing these restrictions, ECHO in partnership with AEG
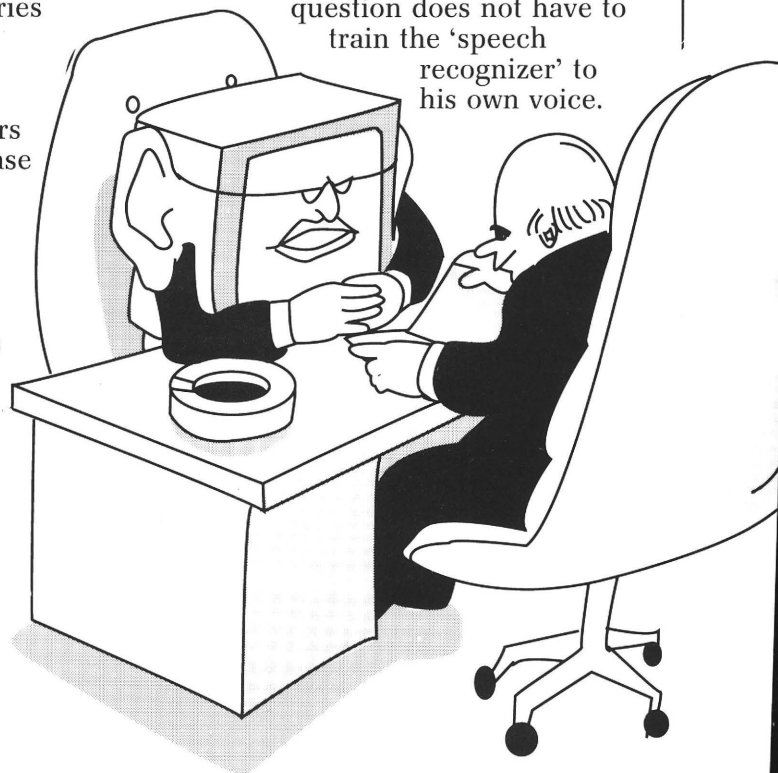
(Olympia Office GmbH-Germany) are currently developing a pilot system which will allow database access in a 'spoken language', i.e. speech input is used to 'formulate' queries and synthetic speech output is used to generate answers from the database in question. This new type of service will provide many new features and capabilities for the user.

Research into voice processing commenced as a branch of artificial intelligence in the early seventies and in the future it is hoped that users will not need any special equipment other than a standard telephone set in order to contact the ECHO system. Current development of voice input/output systems does not yet permit 'man-machine' conversations to be as complex as a normal dialogue between two people, none-the-less, it is possible with todays technology to set up quite a few friendly yet perhaps restricted dialogues. ECHO's aim is to demonstrate and eventually introduce useful new information services which can be accessed by practically anyone without requiring much equipment or training.

Voice processing technology and research comprises the following components: speech recognition; understanding; coding and compression: storage/transmission: and synthesis.

Speech recognition:

Telephone based inquiry and information systems using the public telephone network need speech input systems which are speaker-independent as far as voice recognition is concerned. This means that the speaker in question does not have to train the 'speech recognizer' to his own voice.

Speaker independency means that a 'normalized speakers' voice may be recognized and understood and that a good coverage of deviations of speaking manners from this normalized (dialect free) speech pattern be guaranteed.

Dialects, heavily accented voices, background noise in the area where the telephone is located, and noise in the telephone line itself will all further degrade the recognition quality of the system. For this reason, reliable speaker independent recognition is only possible for a small vocabulary of less than 100 words.

In the ECHO project, AEG Olympia has proposed a classification algorithm which has the possibility of recognising a vocabulary of approximately 25 words. The algorithm is based on whole word templates which means that each word must be uttered in an isolated fashion and that all words must be separated by definite pauses.

Additionally, the classification algorithm has been optimized to adapt to the varying telephone line characteristics of the public network.

Speech output:

Stored speech cannot be used for normal telephone inquiries nor for information systems requiring unlimited text output. A speech output system is therefore used which is based upon written text and which is able to make highly intelligible and natural sounding speech from such written text.

Starting from written text input, different linguistical and phonetical orientated processing stages are involved to produce the control signals for a speech synthesizer. In the first stage the incoming text signals are segmented into their basic elements. The parameters which control stress, melody and intonation are produced. These so-called prosodic parameters are part of the word structure and the phonetic structure and are responsible for the naturalness and the intelligibility of the produced speech signal.

The second stage is based upon the phonemic description of the written text and will generate the articulatory parameters necessary for the generation of the final control parameters for the speech synthesizer itself.
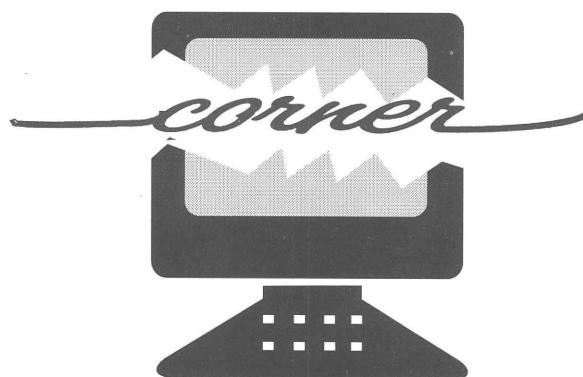
The last stage involves the use of an electronic speech synthesizer based on a model of the natural speech production mechanism. The electronic model consists of a pulse generator for voiced sounds, a noise generator for the unvoiced sounds and a controllable digital filter to model the transmission characteristics of the natural vocal tract.

Using text-to-speech synthesis allows for very flexible and easy creation of output texts to be spoken and this is very important for certain types of application.

Time schedule:

The system should be available for testing during the first months of 1990 and hopefully will be available to the public by June 1990 in the following language versions: English, French and German.

For more detailed information, please contact the ECHO Customer service (Mr. Roland Haber), or Mr. J.V. Irion
AEG Olympia Office GmbH
Buecklestr. 1-5
D-7750 Konstanz
Tel: +49-7531-86-2447
Fax: +49-7531-86-2421
Tlx: 733 233

Computer News Corner

In the previous issue of Echonews

we mentioned the installation from mid-October onwards of a more powerful ECHO computer. The above has now been successfully installed and Users should already have noticed an improved response time from the system.

Not only has ECHO acquired a new computer, but on-site at the ECHO Customer service a whole new range of equipment has recently been installed in order to assist the various tasks required of the team such as customer administration and database production etc..

The Customer service now has 6 Siemens workstations and a laser printer at its disposition which are connected through a front-end processor directly to the main-frame computer. Of the 6 workstations in operation:

1 is constantly used for updating the Dianeguide; 1 is reserved for customer administration (new clients, address changes etc.);

1 is reserved for system administration; 1 is used for the updating of our various mailing lists (e.g. l'M News with 45000 addresses); and the remaining two workstations are used for uploading information onto various databases (e.g. SDC1, Euristote etc.).

Should you have any comments or suggestions to make that would enable us to improve the quality of our service even further, please do not hestitate to contact the ECHO support team.

ECHO training

ECHO will be organising a series of CCL training courses and Information days in various towns throughout Europe over the coming months.

If you would like to become familiar with our retrieval language (Common Command Language), or, would simply like to know a bit more about ECHO and its database range, please contact the ECHO Help-desk for further details on how to register:

ECHO Help-desk,
B.P. 2373,
L-1023 Luxembourg
LUXEMBOURG G.D.

Tel.: +352-48 80 41
Fax: +352-48 80 40
Tlx: 2181 eurol lu

Training courses in other Community countries are also planned; dates will be published in due course.

COURSE DATES AND LOCATIONS

Information Days:

Brussels	05/12/89	(FR)*
London	05/12/89	(EN)
Belfast	15/12/89	(EN)
Sheffield	18/12/89	(EN)
Roma	15/02/90	(IT)
Milan	19/02/90	(IT)
Copenhagen	26/02/90	(DK)
Lisbon	05/03/90	(EN)
Milan	07/03/90	(IT)
London	24/04/90	(EN)
Lisbon	06/06/90	(EN)
London	02/10/90	(EN)

CCL Training Days:

Brussels	06/12/89	(FR)
London	06/12/89	(EN)
Belfast	15/12/89	(EN)
Sheffield	18/12/89	(EN)
Paris	24/01/90	(FR)
Paris	25/01/90	(FR)
Lisbon	13-14/02/90	(FR)
Roma	16/02/90	(IT)
Milan	20/02/90	(IT)
Copenhagen	27/02/90	(DK)
Lisbon	06/03/90	(EN)
Milan	08/03/90	(IT)
London	25/04/90	(EN)
Lisbon	08-09/05/90	(EN)
Lisbon	07/06/90	(EN)
Paris	3rd week/06/90	(FR)
London	03/10/90	(EN)

Diary dates

ECHO will be represented at the following seminars and exhibitions over the coming months:

Exhibitions:

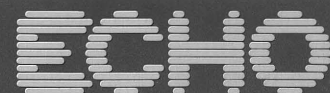|		
London	12-14/12/89	ONLINE '89
Brussels	25-27/01/90	DATA '90
Maastricht	05-08/02/90	IT EUROPE
Paris	xx-xx/xx/90	SICOB
Frankfurt	13-15/05/90	INFOBASE '90
Roma	07-09/06/90	EURINFO 90

If you want to visit our stand at any one of the above-mentioned events, please contact the ECHO Help-desk beforehand to find out if we have any free entrance tickets available.

TED PRESENTATIONS:

Bremen	05/12/89
Dublin	12/12/89

I would like to order the following videos:

☐ **ECHO short** (without CCL)   ☐ **TED**
☐ **ECHO long** (with CCL)   *each 15.- ECU*

Language: ☐ English   *Format* ☐ VHS
☐ French
☐ German
☐ Italian
☐ Spanish   *System:* ☐ Pal
☐ Secam

I also would like the new ECHO Manual
(cost price 10.- ECU)

☐ Yes   ☐ No

_____
Name   Organisation

_____
Street   City   Country

A cheque of _____.- ECU is included.
(no delivery without cheque)