

Uplink

June 1994

A newsletter for the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting

Uplink update

In the past few months, Uplink has dealt mostly with data that you bring in-house. However, in this issue we're looking at the online world of data with help from some of the better journalistic users.

While it can be fun to play in cyberspace, your news organization will be much happier if you return with instant information for a story rather than wide-eyed tales of electronic trips to arcane libraries in Barcelona.

Thus, we've tried to tilt our articles toward the practical end with features on FedWorld, CompuServe, the World Wide Web, and ProfNet. We don't pretend to do more here than dip our toe in the big online ocean so don't hesitate to send us advice.

Meanwhile, in the spirit of online, the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting intends to set up a listserv (mailing list on the Internet) in the next month. See you on the Net.

Inside

Page 3
Fed or Med? Find it online

Page 4
Insights into Mosaic

Page 5
Fixing data in FoxPro

Page 6
New looks for the Net

Page 7
ProfNet: Beyond the Rolodex

Page 8
Bits, Bytes and Barks

Quick queries make reporter's life easier

Mining your manners online

By Kenton Robinson
The Hartford Courant

Coming back to reporting after several years of editing, I cannot remember how I ever managed to do a reporter's job without using online services.

Certainly, I was nowhere near as fast and thorough, and my stories were nowhere near as deep and broad.

And I'm not talking hard news or investigative stories here; I'm talking features.

Example: a restaurateur in Ohio sues some guy for welching on a reservation. Breach of contract, he argues. Not so, the welcher says, there was no contract.

But there was, wasn't there? Whether or not a restaurant reservation is a legally binding contract is for the courts to decide, but there is no question there was a social contract, a promise which basic etiquette requires us to honor, and, if we cannot, to have the courtesy to cancel.

My editor asked me to turn around a quick story exploring the issue of social contracts and the question: what does it say about our society when people feel they have to go to law to enforce the social contracts people used to honor out of common courtesy?

Since this was a question that touched on issues of law and social psychology, I crafted a quick query which I sent out on ProfNet. "Help!" I said, "I need experts on this question." (See related story on page 7.)

Then I left an open message on the CompuServe Legal and Social Issues

Forums: "Anybody out there heard of any similar instances of this sort of thing?"

While my bait drifted in the electronic current, I did some old-fashioned reporting too: Got the number for Judith Martin, for example, and arranged a phoner; hunted down a newly-wedded couple (from the wedding announcements in our own paper) to ask them about RSVPs (another good example of a social contract); dropped into the local bookstore and picked up a copy of Rousseau's "The Social Contract" and read it again for the first time since college.

When I went back to check my lines, I had some bites: A couple of social psychologist types ready to talk to me about the main question, and an intriguing note from a lawyer on the Legal Forum.

"There was a case, I think it was in Florida a few years ago," he wrote. "Where a mother sued her daughter's prom date for standing her up." He couldn't remember anything more about it, but that was all I needed.

Online again, and a quick dip into the electronic archives of the Miami Herald, searching on the words "lawsuit" and "prom" and BINGO! I've got two stories on the case.

I interview Miss Manners et al., and I'm ready to write. My story on the role of etiquette in holding together the social fabric and these signs of its deterioration was picked up by the L.A. Times-Washington Post Wire and run by pa-

Continued on page two

Uplink

June 1994

Volume 6, Number 4

A newsletter for the
National Institute for
Computer-Assisted
Reporting

Editor

Brant Houston

jourjbh@

muccmail.missouri.edu

Managing Editor

Matt Reavy

c598895@mizzou1.missouri.edu

Senior Contributing Editors

Richard Mullins

jourram@muccmail.missouri.edu

Jennifer LaFleur

jourjal@muccmail.missouri.edu

Contributing Editors

Rosemary Armao

Tracy Barnett

Staff

Drew Sullivan,

Kathy Thomas,

Rich Deming, Seth

Hamblin and Gwen

Carleton

Uplink is published every
month by the National
Institute for Computer-
Assisted Reporting,
13 Neff Hall,

School of Journalism,
University of Missouri,
Columbia, MO 65201.
(314) 882-0684.

Subscription price is \$30
(U.S.) annually

Postmaster: Please send
address changes to
NICAR.

NICAR is a joint effort

of Investigative
Reporters and Editors
and the University of
Missouri School of
Journalism with the
mission of bringing the
journalism industry into
the 21st Century.

NICAR services
include hands-on
newsroom training
seminars in computer-
assisted reporting,
special academic and
advanced training at
Missouri, data analysis
and advice.

NICAR is supported by
a grant from The
Freedom Forum
intended to help the
institute deliver its
services nationwide to
news organizations and
associations.

Continued from page one

pers all over the country.

And I can only wonder how I ever could have done it without the use of online information services. How long would it have taken me to find the people I needed to talk to and the information I needed? There is no question in my mind I would not — within the bounds of my deadline, anyway — ever have found much of it.

There is hardly a story I do that I don't use my modem. It's like having a giant library-telephone directory at your desk, with information available to you almost instantaneously. And people! You can find experts in everything from American Indian iconography to the language acquisition of children to modern tattooology.

No matter how arcane your subject, somewhere out there there's somebody who's made a study of it, or, if not, at least has enough knowledge of related subjects to give it some intelligent perspective.

Many reporters I talk to say they think using ProfNet is somehow cheating; it makes it too easy to find the right person to talk to. But there is an art to the query, as it were. You must make it as precise (and concise) as possible and make

clear how close your deadline looms. Then, when you put the query on the net, it goes to hundreds of institutions where flaks cull through their staff lists for someone who might be a good match, and sometimes they stretch things a bit, so you have to do some culling yourself.

And as for tracking down non-academic people, when you have only a bit of information about them, online services can't be beat. For example, when I recently had to locate the "Worm Woman of Kalamazoo" for a story I was doing on vermicomposting, I had only to go to CompuServe's Phone-File and search on her last name, Appelhof, in the Kalamazoo area to get her number and street address.

When I recently did a story on the human vomeronasal organ and pheromones, I dipped into the National Library of Medicine to pick up the dozen most recent articles on this and related subjects in the medical journals (and with them the names of researchers, of course).

Sure, I could have gone to a library and spent a day digging for this stuff; instead I spent less than 5 minutes and never left my desk.

Other people at my newspaper have dumb terminals on their desks, which allow them to do nothing but write stories on the Atex system. I have a PC, with a modem, which allows me to travel the world.

Online sources you can't do without

Here's my list of most used online resources. These are all sources I use virtually every week, without leaving my desk. All I simply do is dial into the local access number for CompuServe.

1) ProfNet. Need to find an expert on Civil War memorial statuary? Or the TV habits of blacks and whites? If there's anyone out there who knows about these things, a query to ProfNet is your fastest way to track him or her down. (See also Dissertation Abstracts below.)

2) Phonefile. Every listed phone number in the United States is at your fingertips in instants. If you only have a hunch as to the general geographic area your subject inhabits, you can simply search by surname.

3) NewsUSA or the Newspaper Library. Electronic morgues of all the major and a lot of smaller newspapers across the country. Searchable by subject, keywords and byline.

4) Dissertation Abstracts. If you want to find out whether anybody has ever written a dissertation on the skateboard subculture, the abstracts will tell you who did when and give you a summary of the thesis. Also, there's an order

number, so you can get a copy of the whole thing if you want it.

5) Books in Print. Has anyone ever written a book about your subject? This gives you all the information including author, title, publisher and ISBN number.

6) Magazine Database Plus. Many major and not-so-major magazines and their articles.

7) Academic American Encyclopedia. This may sound like a silly one, but it's handy to be able to look up some general point of reference quickly. And, needless to say, it's also much faster than walking back to the library and searching through the dusty stacks.

8) SIGs or Forums. There are dozens of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and professional forums where people correspond on their subject — be it lawyers or dinosaurs. These are good places to find people to talk to about the subject you're writing about.

**You can contact Kenton Robinson
at his CompuServe address,
75050,2773.**

Fed or Med?

You can find it online

By **Beth Marchak**
The Plain Dealer

information. Several back issues are available on CompuServe at 72511,240.

FedWorld, the government's one-stop snooping for on-line computer databases, is evolving into a reference for those covering the White House.

The database, which was launched in March 1993, was connected to the Internet in August. It contains more than 130 bulletin boards and databases. It's the easiest place to find White House information. The only problem is it's on a different menu, which makes it hard to find.

To get there, Type "W-house" at the prompt, follow the menu and find access to White House speeches, press releases, appointments, and major releases like the health care bill.

Journalists and others who dial into various FedWorld computers don't get complete access to all the information that employees do. In some cases that means the database/bulletin board is almost worthless. In other cases, like Quick Facts! Information on Alcohol Abuse and the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, the information is a great start on a story.

The messaging bulletin boards are not as lively as on CARR-L or The Well, but they are useful for contacts for government issues like the National Performance Review where federal workers love to jaw about who ought to pay for their business cards.

FedWorld is still evolving like its commercial counterparts. In late May, for example, it added several trade documents which it promoted on the welcome screen.

Medical resources on line

The Internet has a vast array of medical resources. Here are three that could prove useful to reporters this summer:

■ **RSI: Repetitive Stress Injury** newsletter tracks studies, medical literature and new treatments for those suffering from RSI.

Some of the stories in the newsletter deal with the psychological studies of the illness, lawsuits, the ergonomic issues and advances that minimize the disease's impact.

To subscribe, send a message entitled "RSI subscription" to dadadata@world.std.com or call Craig O'Donnell at 617/776-2809 for more

■ **Lyme Disease:** This little known, under-reported disease is the subject of an on-line newsletter published 26 times a year. One way to get it is to gopher to NIH, then to medical publications. The newsletter contains information about studies and outbreaks.

The newsletter, which in part promotes awareness of disease, now contains listings of patient and physician events. It also contains a jargon index and medical abstracts, sightings, treatments book reviews and stories about lobbying Congress for money and research.

Some of the information is clearly too technical for newspapers but it gives sources of outbreaks and those involved in studying them. It's stated purpose is to bring "physicians, researchers and support group leaders together electronically to put the pieces of the LD puzzle together."

To subscribe and get more information message lymenet-1@lehigh.edu.

■ **CancerNet:** Several cancer-related topics are covered here, including AIDS, adult and childhood cancers and drug information summaries, reports on drug trials and some information from Medline. Gopher to NIH and start digging into the sub menus. A few highlights:

The AIDS Daily Summary contains a roundup of local and national and international stories which appears to be available the same day. Statistics, resources, a bibliography and a reference guide for clinicians is also available.

On the same menu is the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, which recently highlighted the increase in rabies cases, examining incidents state by state. The report also had 1991 stats for breast cancer and listed several doctors studying each issue.

Depending on the information sought, the results are available either on line or by fax.

To sign up, send a mail message to cancernet@icib.nci.nih.gov. Type the word help in the body of the message. Contact cheryl@icib.nih.gov with questions or problems.

The FedWorld
messaging bulletin
boards are not as
lively as on CARR-L
or The Well, but
they are useful for
contacts for
government issues
like the National
Performance Review
where federal
workers love to jaw
about who ought to
pay for their
business cards.

You can contact Beth
Marchak at
Marchak@digex.com
or
Marchak@digex.net

Insights into Mosaic

Getting caught in the World Wide Web

By Wallace Winfrey
NICAR Staff

The Internet — it's big, it's cool, it's... really confusing for most people.

With terms like ftp, telnet, and finger, it's not exactly intuitive either. One could spend years just trying to figure out the syntax to send e-mail and transfer files. But if things continue to move in the direction of something called the World Wide Web (w3), this could cease to be a problem.

What is the World Wide Web? Simply put, it's an effort to logically organize the Internet. Developed at CERN laboratories in Geneva, Switzerland, it was originally designed to enable scientists there to share their research on high-energy physics. It quickly became obvious that w3 would be a good thing to implement on the Internet as well.

The Web creates a system of "logical" interconnected links between various types of information using hypertext. Even if you

haven't heard the term "hypertext," you've probably already used it. Windows help files are a form of hypertext, as is Hypercard on the Macintosh.

Here's how it works: say you are reading an article about the Cuban revolution and you come across the words Che Guevara. In a hypertext environment, clicking on the underlined words would take you to a document about Che, perhaps a biography or a commentary of sorts. However, text can get really confusing

as you jump from one document to the next. Besides, who wants to limit their information to text only? With hypermedia you can click on underlined text and go not only to another text document, but to a graphics file (a photograph of Che Guevara), a sound (a speech by Guevara), or even a digitized movie.

The Web is organized around the concept of "pages." These pages are technically called HTML ("HyperText Markup Language") documents. HTML is a low-level programming language that defines how that page will look and where the links (the underlined words) go to when that page is viewed.

Until last year, there really was no good application to browse the Web. Almost all "browser" applications were text-based, and while it was possible to link other forms of media, you had to download it first, and then open it up with the appropriate program. Then came Mosaic.

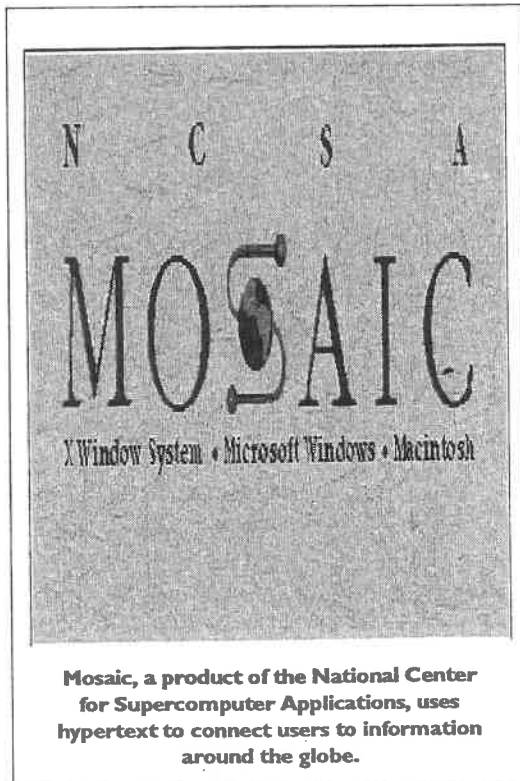
Mosaic represented a breakthrough in w3 browsers. With Mosaic, you are no longer confined to looking at a command-line using arrow keys to navigate. You can now point-and-click your way around using a mouse. Mosaic also has the ability to display graphics within a document, and even define text size and appearance.

All this gives w3 pages a hitherto-unrealized capacity to present information in a way that is not only logical, but even visually appealing. This might account for the jump in w3 use of over 300,000 percent in the last year alone.

Mosaic also lets you listen to the linked sound files and view the linked movies while you are browsing a document. While it relies on other applications to accomplish this, the operation is smooth enough that it's more or less invisible.

Other applications can also be linked to Mosaic, letting you use telnet or tn3270 or e-mail seamlessly. Mosaic also lets you input data into a page. This is extremely useful if you want to send or receive feedback on the appearance of a page.

However, feedback is only one small application of data entry onto pages. HTML



documents (Mosaic pages) can also be used as a front end for database files. Just as many use Visual Basic to customize a front-end for their FoxPro files, HTML can be used as well.

This brings up some very interesting possibilities, especially in the realm of computer-assisted reporting. By putting a database up and customizing a front-end for it using HTML, it now becomes possible to deliver that data to anyone in the world, in the form they want it.

Say you are working on a story about bridges (to lift from a recent CARR-L thread) and you want to know how many bridges in the United States last year didn't pass initial inspections. You also want to know, out of those that didn't, how many were closed down. You would then go to the appropriate w3 page, enter in the variables (bridges, inspection failure and closings), define the form of your output (as a .dbf or .txt file) and then press enter.

The computer at the other end does its crunching and then generates a customized document on-the-fly containing the relevant information. No more waiting weeks for a 9-track tape. No more trying to convert the data into a readable form. Just data, as you want it, when you need it.

Mosaic does require a certain kind of connection to the Internet to work properly. To use it, you have to have what is known as a TCP/IP connection. Local area networks connected to the Internet sometimes have this kind of connection.

If you are confined to a modem, you need a dial-up TCP/IP connection to a SLIP server. What these are demands a whole other article to explain. But if you have the right connection, you can access the Web fairly easily.

To download the latest version of Mosaic, ftp to ftp.ncsa.uiuc.edu and look in the directory called Mosaic. I should mention however that there are other browsers besides Mosaic. For example, just this morning, I downloaded a browser for the Macintosh called MacWeb. In its defense, though, Mosaic is the only browser to have been implemented on the Mac, Windows, the Amiga and XWindows.

Editor's Note: If you have any questions, feel free to write the author at c512571@showme.missouri.edu. If you already have Mosaic, you can look at his home page as well. It's located at <http://www.phlab.missouri.edu/c512571-www>.

Tech Tips

Fixing data in FoxPro

By Richard Mullins

University of Missouri

When you're cleaning up data or making names, addresses, and other details consistent, some changes can be done on a field as a whole. For example, if the city field has "St. Louis" or "Saint Lewis" you can issue a command to change it to "ST LOUIS" in every case.

The SQL command for this is UPDATE. FoxPro, while it supports SQL, does not include the UPDATE command, since the XBase command language that FoxPro also uses already had an equivalent command for UPDATE.

In FoxPro, the command for this task is:

```
REPLACE ALL city WITH "ST LOUIS" ;  
FOR city = "St. Louis" OR city = "Saint Lewis"
```

The FoxPro command words are capitalized in this example for clarity. The semicolon allows you to continue the command to the next line.

You'll notice that not only did this example fix a gross misspelling and standardize on the abbreviation for "Saint," it also capitalized every letter and got rid of the period in the abbreviation. Both of these steps are good standards for address information and are used by the Federal Election Commission and the Postal Service.

To carry out this standard of no periods in an address field, we need a command to search and replace inside a field. Here's the FoxPro command:

```
REPLACE ALL address WITH STRTRAN  
(address, ".")
```

The STRTRAN() function does the work inside the fields. The syntax for STRTRAN() looks like this:

```
STRTRAN ( <FieldName>, <SearchFor>,  
<ReplaceWith> )
```

The function takes its working instructions from the stuff you put inside the parentheses. The computer word for "stuff inside the parentheses" is "arguments."

The first argument says "Here's where to do the work." A comma signals the second argument, which says "Look for this string of characters." The third argument says "Replace all the strings with this string." If the third argument is missing, then the search string is replaced with nothing. In this case, the periods are removed and nothing is put in their place.

Here's a before-and-after picture:

23 Elm St. N.W.

23 Elm St NW

To capitalize everything in the address field:

```
REPLACE ALL address with UPPER (address)
```

Mullins can be reached at jourram@muccmail.missouri.edu.

New looks for the Net

By Jennifer LaFleur
NICAR Staff

Silicon Valley — Net surfers from around the country came to test the waters in San Jose June 1 and 2 at the 1994 Spring Internet World Conference, sponsored by Meckler Media, Inc., publisher of Internet World magazine. The conference provided Internet training and a look at the latest technology for "getting wired."

My search through this maze of vendor stands and demo rooms provided a living model of the Internet itself — there was just so much "stuff."

Before coming to this conference, I was fairly confident in my nerd-abilities. I was humbled when I entered rooms filled with heavy users for whom the discussion of network protocols is mere small-talk.

After being knocked aside by a fellow conference attendee who swept by me on roller blades and clutched a fist full of demo disks, I wound my way through the massive web of hardware suppliers, GUIs, booksellers, software vendors and online services suppliers.

GUIs, or Graphic User Interfaces were the hot topic at the conference. These are programs that provide a point-and-click tool for navigating through the sea of information available on the Internet.

Keep in mind that most GUIs do not provide access to the Internet — you have to do that through an Internet service vendor. Rather, these programs provide an electronic roadmap to the Internet through your desktop PC or Macintosh. Here are a few of the GUIs that were on display at Internet World:

■ **Internet in a Box** (O'Reilly & Associates, Inc and SPRY, Inc.) This is a box containing all the tools for PC users to connect to the Internet: optional automatic connection to the Internet via a service provider (for those who don't have access); Global Network Navigator, an interactive guide to the Internet's resources; AIR Series Internet applications for e-mail, Usenet, file transfer, TELNET and Gopher; and two books describing how to use the system.

■ **WinGopher** (NOTIS Systems, Inc) This

is a graphical tool for searching GopherSpace on the Internet through the Windows environment. GopherSpace is a collection of publically available resources that use a protocol designed by the University of Minnesota. This system does not handle World Wide Web (full-text indexing) or e-mail. For more information: wingopher@notis.com.

■ **Cameleon (NetManage)**. This program provides complete desktop communications for the Windows environment. Cameleon provides a graphical interface for accessing GopherSpace; Netnews, an Internet news group manager; WhoIs, an application for identifying people on the Internet. In addition, Cameleon provides other network communications utilities such as e-mail, file and printer-sharing and terminal emulation. For more information, call (408) 973-7171.

■ **WorldLink for Macintosh and DOS** (Intercon) WorldLink is a accessing program and an online service that allows Internet access for individuals. With this program, you use a modem to access information that is available through electronic mail, network news groups and online services obtainable via anonymous FTP (file transfer protocol). Users pay a monthly fee, plus connect-time fees. For more information: info@intercon.com.

■ **MKS Internet Anywhere** (Mortice Kern Systems) provides an interface for the Windows environment to e-mail and network news on the Internet. Users must already have a UUCP network connection to the Internet. For more information: mksia@mks.com.

■ **NetCruiser (NetCom)** NetCruiser is a user interface for the Windows environment the system also provides access to the Internet through NetCom's service. Access includes: electronic news, ARCHIE (keyword search), File Transfer Protocol for downloading software and files, e-mail, International Relay Chat (real-time chat), TELNET access to other computers on the Internet, UseNet, Gopher and VERONICA (search by subject). For more information: info@netcom.com.

You can contact Jennifer LaFleur at Jourjal@muccmail.missouri.edu.

GUIs, or Graphic User Interfaces, are programs that provide a point-and-click tool for navigating through the sea of information available on the Internet. Most GUIs do not provide access to the Internet — you have to do that through an Internet service vendor. Rather, these programs provide an electronic roadmap to the Internet through your desktop PC or Macintosh.

Beyond the Rolodex

By Dan Forbush

ProfNet System Operator

Reporters throughout the U.S. and around the world have come to increasingly rely upon a unique source of information that allows them to connect to sources on a wide range of topics via the Internet — the State University of New York's Internet Demonstration Project (IDP).

The University at Stony Brook launched the IDP in Fall, 1992 with two goals: 1) to create on the Internet a global community of public information officers, linking the world's major educational, scientific and cultural institutions; and 2) to use the Internet to increase the frequency, immediacy and quality of communication between journalists and college and university faculty members. The project has two parts:

—ProfNet, a cooperative of public information officers linked via Internet to give journalists and authors quick and convenient access to expert sources;

—"PIOs Online," a directory of academic PIOs who can be reached by email.

ProfNet

"ProfNet" ("Professors Network") is centered in Stony Brook's Office of News Services. At ProfNet's core is an e-mail distribution list that enables our news staff to send journalists' queries simultaneously to public information officers throughout North America and overseas. PIOs respond directly to the inquirer by e-mail, fax, phone or hard mail.

As of May, ProfNet's membership included 1,023 PIOs representing 600 colleges, universities, and a wide range of academic, government, and corporate entities oriented to scholarship and research. Most of the Ivy League and Big Ten are represented, as are such institutions as Stanford, Berkeley, MIT, CalTech, Johns Hopkins and University of Chicago.

Also represented are:

—Federal entities, such as the National Science Foundation, National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, National Research Council, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Office of Naval Research, Smithsonian Institution, Argonne National Laboratory, and others;

—Corporate research labs, such as AT&T Bell Labs and IBM's Thomas J. Watson Research Center and Almaden Research Center;

—Medical centers, such as the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and centers at Stanford, University of Michigan, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Vanderbilt, University of Utah, University of Pennsylvania, University of Southern California, and the University of Texas at Houston;

—Schools of business and public policy, including the University of Chicago's Graduate School of Business, Dartmouth's Amos Tuck School, Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, and Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

ProfNet has a rapidly expanding contingent of members in Australia, Europe, Africa and Asia. Among them: Bond University University of Sydney, Macquarie University, University of New South Wales, Queensland University and Griffith University (Australia); University of Heidelberg and University of Bayreuth (Germany); Lund University and Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (Sweden); University of Bergen (Norway); University of Jyväskylä (Finland); Center for Economic Policy Research, University of Southampton, and University of Stirling (United Kingdom); University of St. Gallen (Switzerland); Universiti catholique de Louvain (Belgium); University of Milan (Italy); Rhodes University (South Africa); and Beijing Agricultural University (China).

Among other ProfNet resources in the U.S. are the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Association of American Universities, Brookings Institution, National Opinion Research Center, MacArthur Foundation, Scientists' Institute for Public Information, International Food Policy Research Institute.

PIOs Online

The Stony Brook Guide to PIOs Online provides email addresses and other contact information (phone, fax and hard mail) for 770 public information officers who had joined ProfNet as of December 1, 1993. Any academic PIO with an email address is eligible to be listed in future editions.

To order: Make out check in amount of \$20 to Research Foundation of SUNY. Send to: c/o Dan Forbush, Office of University Affairs, University at Stony Brook, Stony Brook, NY 11794-0605.

To Make a ProfNet Query

In submitting queries, please specify your news organization, the nature of your project, the nature of the expertise you seek, your time frame, and the manner in which you wish PIOs to respond. The more detailed your query—and the more lead time you give us—the more successful your search will be.

There is no fee for conducting ProfNet searches, nor is there any limit to the number or frequency of your queries.

You may deliver queries to ProfNet as follows:

—By CompuServe: 73163, 1362 or 76550,750

—By Internet: profnet@sunysb.edu

—By fax: (516) 632-6313

—By phone: (800) 776-3638

ProfNet queries typically are distributed to the membership within 12 to 24 hours, though you may request a same-day rush query if your deadline demands it. Rush queries should be submitted before 11:30 a.m. Eastern time and are best made by phone.

If you have a concern about maintaining exclusivity on an idea, you may cloak your query so as to conceal both your identity and that of your news organization. Cloaked queries also are best made by phone.

Bits, Bites and Barks

Canadian govt. launches Internet project

Canada's federal government last month launched a pilot project to evaluate an Internet-based service designed to inform citizens about governmental operations.

"The Open Government Project" aims to increase accessibility to government information, officials and Members of Parliament, according to Industry Minister John Manley.

Although available in several formats the new project has been designed to take advantage of the World-Wide-Web, a multimedia, hypertext application.

Anyone interested in accessing the pilot project can do so at the Industry Canada host site or the Canadian Center for Inland Water (Environment Canada). The universities of New Brunswick, Montreal, Calgary, and British Columbia also offer Internet access to the project.

SITES:

WWW Mother Site:

<http://debra.dgbt.doc.ca/opengov>

WWW Mirrors:

<http://www.culturenet.ucalgary.ca/opengov>

<http://www1.cciw.ca/opengov>

<http://www.unb.ca/opengov>

<http://www.emr.ca/opengov>

<http://www.kaapeli.fi/opengov/>

<http://www.cs.ubc.ca/opengov>

<http://bri3e.ere.umontreal.ca:6764/opengov>

Gopher Mother Site:

<debra.dgbt.doc.ca>

Gopher Mirrors:

<gopher.emr.ca>

EPA improving online access

The U.S. Environment Protection Agency (EPA) has decided to expand its Seattle-based bulletin board system after public information requests more than quadrupled in recent months.

The agency will be adding a new phone line to the system soon. Additional plans call for the possibility of Internet access or an 800 number to eliminate user phone bills.

Although the EPA currently offers some documents on Internet, those materials are not updated regularly, said system operator Thomas Denning.

The Seattle BBS site handles nationwide Superfund reports, Resource Cost Recovery Act reports, and hazardous waste data among other things. The site also offers a daily "news conference" of EPA news and information.

The BBS can be accessed at (206) 553-2241. New users are required to complete a brief questionnaire before accessing the system.

State land records going on CD

Federal land titles from 13 states are being moved to CD-ROM as part of a project designed to preserve the historic documents, according to a recent article in Government Computer News.

The task, which the Eastern States Bureau of Land Management expects to complete by the year 2000, involves states west of the Ohio River where the government sold off public land to repay Revolutionary War debts.

Some 260,000 land patents from Alabama are due to be published next month. Arkansas, Florida, and Louisiana have already been completed. Others on the list are: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

The records have a reported conversion accuracy rate of 99 percent with 99.5 percent index accuracy.

UC Berkeley offers Mosaic site

Journalists with access to Mosaic may want to check out a relatively new site at the University of California-Berkeley (<http://128.32.158.47>).

The graduate school of journalism there has created a Mosaic page featuring places of interest for journalists. It also contains student photos and some information about the school itself.

Usenet for those with e-mail only access

Anyone who feels a desperate need for Usenet but can't find a feed may want to try getting Netnews via a listserv. For more info send an email message to listserv@ccl.kuleuven.ac.be. In the first line type the command "/NNHELP" and you should be on your way.

Internet guide to govt. sources available

Those of you using Internet to find sources of information from or on the government may want to check out the Internet Guide to Government Business and Economic Sources.

The 50 page guide (122K) can be found at the Clearinghouse of Subject-Oriented Internet Resource Guides on the University of Michigan Libraries gopher.

Anonymous FTP:

host: una.hh.lib.umich.edu

path: /inetdirsstacks/govdocs:tsangaustin

Gopher:

via University of Minnesota list of gophers.

menu: North America/USA/Michigan/Clearinghouse of Subject-Oriented Internet Resource Guides

Mosaic:

gopher://una.hh.lib.umich.edu/00/inetdirsstacks/govdoc%3atsangaustin.