OF WHAT QUALITY BE THE UCSB RESOURCE EVALUATORS?
A Response to "Feast of Famine"

In RFC 531, M.A. Padlipsky complains that the UCSB resource
evaluators were derelict in not consulting the Resource Notebook for
available documentation. In addition, Padlipsky equates the goals of
the resource evaluators to the goals of the software repository
advocaters. A misunderstanding exists and perhaps, with this note,
may be cleared.

To respond to Padlipsky's example of UCSB botching login attempts let
me make two comments. First, more people than the resource
evaluators were accessing the ARPANET. The group of evaluators, at
least, knew the login procedure from the Resource Notebook. (By the
way, we do have a Multics Programmers Manual.) Second, the OLS TELNET
echoes no lower case, which can generate confusion. Even UCSB's
technical liaison, after consulting the Resource Notebook, managed to
botch his login.

The first law of resource evaluation, at least for UCSB evaluators,
is "read the Resource Notebook!" (RFC 369, incidentally, was based on
a Resource Notebook that was barren compared to the notebook of
today.) Questions left unanswered by the Notebook are resolved by
accessing online documentation first at the NIC and second at the
site being evaluated. If, after all this effort, questions still
exist, then a consultant is contacted. Consultation may be either
online or by telephone and may entail purchasing appropriate user
manuals (for some of the resources we evaluated, no manuals existed).
Our approach has been to consult the most publicly available
documentation first. Only if the advertised paths fail do we resort
to personal contact with a (busy) technical liaison. If technical
liaisons wish to be consultants for uninitiated users and feel that
this is their role we will gladly modify our behavior.

There certainly is a meal, to use Padlipsky's analogy, of
documentation already available on the Network. However, a meal is
no good without silverware. Site specific and function specific
MINIMANS (see RFC 369 and RFC 519) are attempts to provide this
tableware. Our first-pass MINIMANS are available on request for
those who would like to see what we are trying to do.

Resource evaluators are concerned with much more than documentation.
A closer reading of prior RFC's would have shown that we investigate
dynamic phenomenon such as help facilities, online consultation,
response time, reliability, and human engineering. We make
suggestions for improvement. Indeed we see ourselves, at least for
UCSB users, in the role of plain clothes inspector. We don't claim
absolute efficiency but we do claim good intent and good results. We
have spurred improvements at local as well as foreign network sites.
We apologize to any we may have offended in the past with poor
reviews. We are learning, continually, how best to say things in a
constructive rather than destructive way.

         [This RFC was put into machine readable form for entry]
        [into the online RFC archives by Javier Echeverria 2/98]