SOUTHERN ONTARIO: REGIONAL INITIATIVES AND TRENDS

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ABSTRACT

System developments, data base production activities and information service developments in southern Ontario are explored. Particular organizations which represent the private, academic or governmental sectors are selected for discussion as it is hoped that their innovations or decisions may constitute some direction for the future.

RESUME

Présentation des développements de systèmes, de la production de base de données et des réalisations en services d'information dans le sud de l'Ontario. Certains organismes privés, académiques ou gouvernementaux ont été choisis pour discussion car l'on espère que leurs innovations ou décisions puissent indiquer de nouvelles voies pour l'avenir.

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INTRODUCTION

To commence this presentation believing that it is possible to delineate regional trends in southern Ontario in such a limited time would be utterly foolish. To believe that one can generalize "trends" from a discussion of localized initiatives would be a questionable hypothesis to say the least. But, following the path laid down by previous chapter presidents, I am to attempt to report on as many innovative, representative, and I hope interesting, activities taking place in our field within southern Ontario.

Rather than list isolated initiatives, this presentation will focus on activities representative of various sectors of society, such as, the commercial or "private" sector, or the government sector, or the academic sector. Parts of the discussion will be delivered (and augmented by) representatives of these sectors. May I present Bob Gibson of MICROMEDIA LTD. and Gordon MacLean of OECA (Ontario Educational Communications Authority).

To provide some sort of organization to the following, I would like to focus on three major areas: (1) systems developments; (2) data base developments; and lastly, (3) service developments. Each of these broad catagories, in turn, will be discussed according to input from each of the sectors. Furthermore, unlike the past, one of my goals is to portray the online retrieval functions of organizations which do not have formal libraries or well-established information handling procedures, but which are nevertheless active bibliographic system users.

SYSTEM DEVELOPMENTS

I suppose any discussion of system developments in southern Ontario would have to begin with a progress report on library automation systems. We will start with a look at the University of Toronto.

UTLAS

As many of you know, the University of Toronto Library Automation Systems (UTLAS) has a data base approaching 3,000,000 bibliographic records which form an online cataloguing support tool for about 200 university, public, community college and school libraries. Recently emphasis has been placed on the control of cataloguq records through automated authority files and on the micropublishing of catalogue data. Much of the authority work being done at UTLAS concerns PRECIS and this leads nicely into a discussion of recent developments in the use of PRECIS for subject access and control of large bibliographic files.

PRECIS

In the spring of 1976 the Ministry of Education recieved funding to build a model for a bibliographic records data base that used PRECIS (Preserved Context Indexing System) for subject access. During the past two years the Ministry has been developing a proposal for a mini-network encompassing school libraries. These libraries, secondary as well as community college libraries, have a file-sharing arrangement with UTLAS and use PRECIS for subject retrieval.

PRECIS (cont'd)

Perhaps most interesting among recent developments surrounding PRECIS in an educational environment are the activities of OECA combined with those of the National Film Board to provide access to visual materials via PRECIS. Gordon MacLean from OECA is here to give us a better picture of these developments.

Ontario Educational Communications Authority

(Gordon MacLean will speak on OECA activities).

UNICAT/TELECAT

Competing for attention in Ontario's academic libraries is the Council of Ontario Universities' online cataloguing system known to most of you as UNICAT/TELECAT. Most recently the focus within UNICAT/TELECAT has been the introduction of serials to the system. More attention is being paid to the by-products of such an online venture as is witnessed by recent interest in the authority lists, COMcatalogues, accession lists and spine labels which can be automatically generated.

With UNICAT, the Science and Engineering Library of McMaster University has been able to project the complete shift to COMcatlogue as being this June. The shift to COM also coincides nicely with the planned move of the library into a new building and presents an opportune time to despense with the card catalogue completely. Only the main library with its +1,000,000 holdings will retain a retrospective card catalogue.

Online Circulation Systems

While speaking about McMaster, it seems appropriate to mention an online circulation systems which is unique to this university. The system is called OLLICS (or Online Library Interactive Circulation System) and resembles a typical point-of-sale operation where a user's badge is checked against a master holdings file.

Another university presently involved in online circulation is the University of Guelph. (Further details will be provided by the conference date).

[Further contributions on this topic are expected before the conference date].

Online Serials Systems

An online serials system was devloped by T.E.I.G.A. (Ministry of Treasury, Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs) in Toronto and is now fully operational in at least three Toronto libraries: TEIGA Library, Ministry of Labour and Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce Corporate Library. The Ministries of Education and Colleges and Universities are currently implementing the same serials system. Further inquiries should be directed to Barbara Weatherhead, Head Librarian of TEIGA.

CANSIM/SDL

Although CANSIM is probably thought of more often as a data base (or data bases) rather than as a system/data base combination, we will treat it here as both data base (CANSIM) with the system which offers the most expansive access, SDL (Systems Dimensions Limited), since for our purposes the two are inseparable.

Last January, Systems Dimensions Limited announced a mandate to provide nationwide access and customer support for the Statistics Canada Main Base known as CANSIM. On January 16th, 1978 the Toronto chapter of CAIS served as a test group for the first in a series of seminars to be launched on the topic CANSIM and the services of SDL. Not only was the workshop a success, but Toronto's CAIS members witnessed online retrieval and manipulation of statistical data through the APL language.

Globe & Mail

Like CANSIM and Stats Can, the Globe has taken on a roll seldom achieved in the world of information processing, that is, to be both publisher in hardcopy and magnetic format as well as author of original material and, at the same time, to have a large part in the electronic dissemination of that original data.

Together with QL Systems Ltd. and the Text II software of the System Development Corporation,the Globe has produced an online, full-text and ever-growing newspaper retrieval system/data base. As an attempt to allow outside access to the online file, the Globe has begun to accept QL System users to search thier file and are monitoring usage and behavior. Further details may be obtained from the Library of the Globe & Mail.

Information Bank in Southern Ontario

Certainly the Globe & Mail is not alone in the world of news-paperretrieval systems. The New York Times Information Bank has existed for more than seven years and has recently taken on a new dimension in Canada. As of last December, the distribution and user support for the INFORMATION BANK in Canada was assumed by INFOMART Search Service. As a result of this liason, the INFORMATION BANK began to index and abstract three Canadian newspapers, two of which are produced in Toronto: Toronto Star, The Financial Times of Canada and the Edmonton Jounral. As a result of this and several system refinements made in the

last year, usage of the 'INFOBANK' has spread beyond the newsrooms and broadcasting libraries where it had long been accepted has a vital resource.

QL Systems Ltd. - an update

1977 seems to have been a 'newspaper-information' year for onliners and QL Systems Ltd. has been involved in the development of the Globe & Mail's online file as well as having mounted the CNI (Canadian Newspaper Index) data base.

Several software enhancements are planned for the coming year and data base additions and telecommunications plans will be discussed in the later portions of this presentation.

Infomart - an update

The Canadian Newspaper Index (CNI) was also placed online by INFOMART, an internationally used bibliographic system having a main office in Toronto. The last year has wrought several software improvements to INFOMART's ORBIT such as left-hand truncation of terms and a variety of stored-search capabilities. Planned for the immediate future are features which allow the automatic indexing of off-line printouts and a statistical manipulation capability for online analysis of retrieved statistics. More information on newer capabilities will be presented at the conference.

Shepherd & Watters Information Systems Ltd.

Located in London, Ontario, Shepherd and Watters have developed a flexible and cost-efficient retrieval program called CACTUS. The system is being used for inhouse literature files at DOFASCO and has been under consideration by several organizations including Ministry of Labour Library and the Sheridan Park Research Community.

Information London

Shepherd & Watters' CACTUS retrieval program also serves INFORMATION LONDON which stores data of interest to local residents. While an independent venture, INFORMATION LONDON maintains close ties with local library systems.

Peter Leigh-Bell & Associates

Mr. Leigh-Bell is marketing an information system designed to handle full-text retrieval. The unique features of the system are its handling of compressed data and a user-imposed subject access. For more information, I suggest that you contact Mr. Peter Leigh-Bell in Burlington.

Non-bibliographic Systems

I would like to conclude this portion of the presentation with a look at two users of non-bibliographic systems who work in non-library environments but who are quite proficient bibliographic system searchers as well. My two examples emanate from the private sector. They are the Media Research and Evaluation Group of the Financial Post, and United Science and Technology Limited, a technical consulting firm in Downsview, Ontario.

Media Research Group (Financial Post). The Media Research Group of The Financial Post is representative of the research and planning departments of advertising agencies across the country. The three full-time staff use an interactive system designed to measure the effectiveness of any given ad campaign whether the proposed medium is a TV commercial or a roadside billboard. There are about five major "reach frequency" systems (as they are called): PMB II (Print Measurement Bureau); Telmar; Harris Media Systems; Interactive Market Surveys; and Crossley Survey Systems. The Post uses PMB together with CANSIM and INFOMART's ORBIT for access to other supportive data bases. Recently the Post Group began to access the New York Times INFORMATION BANK for company intelligence material.

United Technology and Science Limited. [Further details to be made available at the conference].

DATA BASE DEVELOPMENTS

The private, academic and government sectors in and around Toronto offer a wealth of data base creation activities. From the private sector MICROMEDIA LTD. emerges as an active data base publisher with two products already available online and internationally. I would like to ask Bob Gibson to begin our data base discussions with a closer look at the content, coverage and growth of some of MICROMEDIA's data bases, those online and those in the queu.

Private Sector

CBPI & CNI & Others. [Bob Gibson will provide additional data at the conference. Further access information may be obtained from MICROMEDIA, INFOMART or QL Systems Ltd.]

Canada Law Book & QL Systems Ltd. An expanded menu of legal data bases is now available through QL Systems Ltd. Not only are statutes online but Case Law (retrospective to 1930) as well. For further details on QL's full spectrum of Canadian legal resource material, please speak with QL representatives who are present.

New data bases - Canadian. More information on new files will be available at the conference.

Private Sector - Private Data Bases

Many data base creation efforts remain unknown to the information science community since the material they contain is intended for private use. Several Southern Ontario organizations are involved presently in the development of in-house data files. Among the institutions building large in-house data banks is Polysar. Last spring, Polysar's retrieval system had exceeded 4,000 company reports in addition to articles and trade literature. To supplement their own system, Polysar technicians use ORBIT.

Academic sector

While much of the universities' attention seems to be turned toward large bibliographic files for inventory purposes, the University of Waterloo has developed a unique file for international sports information.

SIRLS. The Faculty of Human Kinetics and Leisure Studies of the University of Waterloo has developed a sociological data bank for sport and leisure. It goes by the name of SIRLS (An Information Retrieval System for the Sociology of Leisure and Sport). The SIRLS group has recently converted to online (inhouse) access via the SPIRES retrieval language.

KODOC. The University of Guelph's KODOC data base of government documents is to be made available through CAN/OLE.

[Further contributions are expected before the conference date].

Government Sector

ONTERIS.ONTERIS is a data bank produced and maintained by the Ontario Ministry of Education and physically housed at OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education). The file containes citations to Ministry funded research projects in the Metro-Toronto area and school board funded research,and is retrospective to 1959. Document backup may be obtained via fiche from Ministry libraries.

Canadian Education Index. Soon to be fully automated, the Canadian Education Index has begun to convert hard copy to machine readible format. [Further details concerning online availability may be available by May].

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INFORMATION SERVICES

Several recent developments would point toward a discovery of new information organizations in the private sector. One information consulting firm, for example, has focused on patents, trademarks and market analysis as a means to help new ideas or inventors to penetrate the marketplace. Most of their investigative work is done online in the large patent and trade literature files.

Search-On-Demand

Information brokers, whether marketing software, packaged bibliographies or advice, seem to be more visible. INFOMART has recently launched a "search-on-demand" service for drop-in or phone-in patrons unable to perform searches themselves. Universities and government reference libraries already have well-established fee-for-searching policies which serve local industry as well as in-house clientele.

Education

Many of the system/software/data base vendors maintain active training programs to support usage of their products. SDL, through which CANSIM is available, offers regular seminars in programming (APL, COBOL and BASIC) in their Toronto, as well as other regional offices. Due to recent demand, INFOMART has been compelled to triple the number of monthly 2-day workshops offerred on ORBIT. TCTS offers telecommunications workshops on variety of levels on an almost daily basis at the TCTS workshop centre, King Street, Toronto.

Telecommunications

Speaking of TCTS, on February 22nd, the Toronto CAIS chapter members were treated to an in-depth discussion of DATAPAC hosted by the Communications Group. DATAPAC itself constitutes a mammoth service development which affects all of us. For the first time in Canada, all urban areas will enjoy local dial-up and north-south, packet-switched, high-speed data communications link-up.

Microform

If only full-document reproduction were as evolved as DATAPAC! However, MICROMEDIA has solutions to offer us and Bob Gibson will describe how he can get research materials to Canadians faster.

CONCLUSIONS

I believe it is possible to derive some general trends or directions from the preceeding litany of projects and developments.

First of all, it seems that the private sector is ambitiously seeking and supporting new applications for data processing and therefore becoming more and more receptive to information retrieval. A larger number of individuals from various backgrounds are being exposed to literature retrieval. Within the last year North York Public Library and Scarborough Public Library moved full-force into bibliographic searching of New York Times, QL Systems and/or INFOMART. Burlington Public Library accesses CAN/OLE.

Whether by 'Hot Line' or formal seminar, various systems have found ways of supporting all of this activity and usage grows with familiarity and comfort.

Document delivery procedures have continued to evolve. While not perfect, online ordering features exist and are being improved constantly.

Finally, the appearance of large Canadian data bases on international as well as national systems have resulted in a greater percentage of inquiries receiving satisfactory answers more quickly. The injection of Canadian content into large international systems has also raised the capability of these systems to respond to many more needs.