

CISTI'S DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF ELECTRONIC MAIL FACILITIES,
FOR MESSAGING AND DOCUMENT DELIVERY

Bonnie Bullock
Head, Client Services
CAN/OLE, CAN/SDI
Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information
National Research Council

ABSTRACT

A discussion of CISTI's development and use of electronic mail, including the history of CAN/DOC on CAN/OLE, the introduction of online messaging and other CAN/DOC enhancements in response to the needs of our clients and CISTI's Document Delivery staff, and CISTI's current use of electronic mail and the problems related to these services.

LE DEVELOPPEMENT ET L'EMPLOI DU COURRIER ELECTRONIQUE
POUR LA FOURNITURE DE DOCUMENTS ET LA TRANSMISSION DE MESSAGES
EN DIRECT A L'ICIST

RESUME

Cette communication discute le développement et l'emploi du courrier électronique à l'ICIST, y compris l'histoire du service CAN/DOC de CAN/OLE, la transmission de messages en direct et autres améliorations apportées au service CAN/DOC suite aux demandes de nos clients et du personnel du service de fourniture de documents. L'usage courant que l'ICIST fait du courrier électronique et les problèmes que cela pose sont aussi discutés.

CISTI'S DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF ELECTRONIC MAIL FACILITIES
FOR MESSAGING AND DOCUMENT DELIVERY

Bonnie Bullock

For many users, online document ordering is an important aspect of online bibliographic systems. At CISTI (Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information), where the Document Delivery section handles an average of 850 interlibrary loan requests each day, online orders, which are legible and often have automatic verification, make the processing of ILL requests much easier. The ability to reply online to the requestor is another valuable feature of online systems, and completes the electronic mail 'circuit'.

Requestors can access CISTI services via more than one online ordering/messaging service, but the primary one is the CAN/DOC feature of its own CAN/OLE (Canadian Online Enquiry) system.

The CAN/OLE system was developed at CISTI in 1974 and started out with 15 centres and two data bases. By 1977 there were 89 centres and eight data bases, containing almost 7 million references. Because CAN/OLE was part of CISTI it was natural that discussions between staff in various departments would lead to suggestions for added features on CAN/OLE. Thus, in July 1977, following meetings between ILL, systems and CAN/OLE staff, CAN/OLE users were able to place interlibrary loan requests online, and this feature was named CAN/DOC.

Requestors used a special parameter of the PRESENT command to identify and place requests for items found on various data bases, and these automatically-verified and complete requests were assigned a number and printed overnight at the NRC (National Research Council) computation centre. The requests were received the following morning in the Document Delivery department and processed along with all other incoming interlibrary loan requests. Since then, there have been further enhancements to CAN/DOC. Clients now use the ORDER command to place requests, and can place CAN/DOC's in three different ways. They can order an item (or items) having found the reference on a data base, place a request using the UNION (Union List of Scientific Serials in Canadian Libraries) data base, where the journal title and CISTI as a location are verified before the user inputs the added bibliographic information required to complete the request, or they can request an item when not connected

to a data base, in which case they must include all of the information they have for the item requested. (CAN/OLE automatically prompts them for the information with lines such as "VOLUME, ISSUE OR REPORT NO.", "NAME OF PUBLICATION", etc.) Aside from normal connect time there is no special charge for using the ORDER command, but regular interlibrary loan costs apply for photocopies and microfiche.

When CAN/DOC first became available, CISTI was the only supplier, but as more data bases were added, especially the Canadian-produced files, the system expanded so that users could request documents found in the ELIAS, OONL and OOT data bases from their respective producers, the Environment Canada libraries, the National Library and the Transport Canada libraries. As new data bases become available, either CISTI or another supplier acknowledge that they will be the primary document provider and agree to offer interlibrary loan services so that users can place online requests on all bibliographic data bases except CODOC (CODOC Document Group, Guelph). However, at the present time we are in the process of making CAN/DOC available on CODOC.

In 1977/78 an average of 167 CAN/DOC orders were placed each month and this grew to 345 per month in 1978/79. CAN/OLE now contains over 11 million bibliographic references in 19 data bases, and has more than 420 centres. CAN/DOC requests exceed 3,000 items per month, and the average monthly increase is currently 11%. In fiscal year 1981/82, 42% of our online requests were generated by individuals or industrial users, 24% by academic users, and 30% from federal, provincial and municipal government agencies other than CISTI.

The main data bases used are NTIS (National Technical Information Services, U.S.), UNION, INSP (Institution of Electrical Engineers, U.K.) and OON (CISTI's catalogued material from 1978), though more and more users are taking advantage of the non-data base request format to place orders for older items or for items not in CAN/OLE data bases.

CAN/DOC has continued to expand and aside from those already mentioned, is available on the following data bases: AOSI (Alberta Oil Sands Index); BIOSIS; Chemical Abstracts; COAL (Coal Abstracts, International Energy Agency, U.K.); Engineering Index; GeoRef; INIS (International Nuclear Information System); and MICROLOG (Micromedia Ltd., Toronto).

To further assist interlibrary loan requestors CAN/OLE also has available online the interlibrary loan and photocopying policies of over 250 Canadian libraries. These messages were made available to users in November 1979, following a survey of all the ULSSCL participants, and are updated and maintained by CAN/OLE staff. They are useful for identifying costs of interlibrary loan services, provide addresses, telephone numbers, etc. and, of course, are

helpful to clients who would use the information other than in conjunction with UNION or CODOC.

In addition to the above feature, CAN/OLE has continued to enhance the CAN/DOC capabilities of the system by the development of an online messaging facility and is now in the process of making the batch CAN/DOC process over into a true electronic mail facility.

The MESSAGE command was released in November 1981 and allows interactive communication between CAN/OLE users. Users send messages using the CAN/OLE logon codes (account numbers) and CISTI is using it to allow clients to contact directly the following sections: Client Services CAN/OLE, CAN/SDI; Health Sciences Resource Centre; Document Delivery; and Reference and Research (for general information and reference inquiries). Any of our over 820 CAN/OLE users across Canada can be contacted, once separate clients have exchanged their logon codes and agreed to accept online mail. CISTI's main use of MESSAGE at the present time is to reply to CAN/DOC requests by the Document Delivery staff. The main problem so far has been the lack of complete information for a request when users query an interlibrary loan request. Without enough information it is difficult to track down individual orders when more than 16,000 items are requested each month.

The messaging capability is already well in place, and CISTI is now in the process of developing the ORDER command so that requests generated online are sent immediately to the designated document supplier. A pilot project within CISTI has been carried out successfully and final specifications have been developed. Once the programming and costing has been completed, CAN/OLE users will have a faster and cheaper electronic mail facility to use. Completion of this project is expected by the end of the year and arrangements will then be made with various data base producers/suppliers to allow requestors to send CAN/DOC's to them directly. CISTI will continue to be the main supplier for those data bases it already provides documents for, but future expansion in the number of suppliers is anticipated. Document suppliers will be able to empty their mailbox at any time during CAN/OLE's scheduled hours of access (6:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. EST), and will be able to reply to orders or messages using the MESSAGE command. The format of requests will be the same as already exists for the ORDER command, but it will be possible for the non-data base requests, which are presently processed by CISTI, to be sent to any authorized supplier code. The National Library will be one of the suppliers, and in addition to their OONL data base, CAN/OLE will soon be mounting the ULSSHS (Union List of Social Sciences and Humanities Serials) file. All libraries whose interlibrary loan policies are not currently in our online file, referred to earlier, will be added to the CAN/OLE file and will enhance the current networking capabilities on the system.

This expansion of CAN/DOC enhances the information network of which CISTI is a part. Due to the high volume, CAN/OLE orders are

the most visible to us at CISTI, since the organization is both an electronic mail vendor and document supplier.

CISTI's clients are researchers and information specialists across the country who need help finding information in its various forms. Over the years, as demands have increased, conventional communication via telephone, telex and mail has been enhanced and expanded by the development of electronic mail services, and CISTI has participated in the electronic mail field as both a user and a creator. In response to requests from the interlibrary loan community CISTI uses other electronic mail services for online document orders. A few of our users send requests and messages via QL Mail, averaging about 60 online document orders per month, and our Document Delivery department is currently involved in a pilot project with Bell Canada using ENVOY 100. All of these electronic services are a necessary requirement to handle the increasing demand for documents and are also an easy way for people to communicate.

CISTI has always considered the communication it maintains with its thousands of Canadian and international contacts as a very important aspect of its national role in the dissemination of medical, scientific and technical information. The computerization of so much information in the past two decades, and the further technological advances that are continuing in the 1980's, means that we at CISTI who are involved in the provision of documents and automated services to clients all across Canada must continue to develop and use such facilities as are available to us to provide fast, efficient and friendly service to our users.