

Questionnaire results

In March 1989, questionnaires were sent out to all TED customers in order to obtain feedback that would enable us to improve the overall quality of the TED database and to tailor it directly to our users needs. Since then, we have been very pleased by the overwhelming response of approximately 15 percent of all questionnaires posted, and we view this high percentage as being a firm indicator of the enormous interest expressed in the TED file.

Being a tender database, TED is primarily meant to inform enterprises about valid calls for tender, but through the questionnaire results another main reason for consulting the database was also highlighted, i.e. half of the respondents use TED not only for the above, but also as an instrument for market and price observation due to the increasing number of contract award documents appearing in the database.

Over 50 percent of the respondents expressed a need for legal background information concerning EC tenders and consequently ECHO has now established a direct link with the responsible Directorate General of the European Commission. In the future ECHO will publish information on the latest changes of EC directives in the 'Ted Corner' section of the Echonews. Many respondents also expressed interest in the implementation of a menu-driven version of the database to facilitate searching. ECHO has as a consequence decided to design and implement a menu

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Who are your fellow users of ECHO?



Have you ever asked yourself what sort of people -- besides yourself -- use ECHO? Are they in the public sector or from private companies? How many are information professionals such as information brokers or consultants? How many are absolute beginners at online? How many are students?

We will soon give you a chance to find out. But first we need your help. We want all users who have not already filled out a questionnaire to let us know what category they fall into. You will find the questionnaire included in this ECHO News.

Some of the more recent customers have already filled out this form. It will be not necessary for them to do it again. If you have not yet filled out the questionnaire, please tick the boxes which

best describe your background. Either fax it or send it in the post to ECHO. We will process the information and in a future issue we will be able to reveal to ECHO customers who you are.

The information on your background will be valuable to ECHO staff to provide the means to give you a better service. We will be better able to respond to your needs, once we know who you are.

LS/11X:330

guided version of TED which will be offered in parallel to the existing command-driven version. This facility will be at your disposal towards the end of this year.

At present, TED is accessible both online and via telex. Due to numerous requests however, ECHO plans to expand the service to satisfy all videotex and even telefax users. Other access media (such as electronic mail) are also being considered.

Many other details emanating from the questionnaire analysis will lead to concrete improvements in TED and we hope that in this way we will be able to offer a product designed and geared specifically towards our users. Should you have any further suggestions please do not hesitate to contact the ECHO Customer service.

Finally, we would like to express our thanks to all users that took time to reply to our questionnaire and to Mr. Patrick Mueller (a stagiaire from Germany) for his help in formulating and evaluating the questionnaire results.

ECHO training

INFORMATION DAYS

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 get in contact with the ECHO Help-desk for further details on how to register at the following address:

ECHO Help-desk,
B.P. 2373,
L-1023 Luxembourg
Tel.: +352 48 80 41
Fax: +352 48 80 40
Tlx: 2181 eurol lu.



(Part A) Free-text searching of 'paragraph 3b'

For those of you that may not yet be aware, free-text searching is now possible in 'paragraph 3b' of the text of a tender document. This means that every word from the 'title' and 'paragraph 3b' of a tender document are searchable in all available languages.

Example:

```
DEF T=GERM; FL=GERM
F WASSERS
```

provides you with all terms commencing with the above word-stem from the German section of the basic index. You may wish to limit your search to a specific 'free-text' field in the following way:

```
F WASSERS/TI
```

to find this word-stem in the title field only;

```
F WASSERS/TEXT or,
```

```
F WASSERS/AB
```

to find the word-stem in the 'text' section of a tender document.

(Part B) Using the 'controlled vocabulary'

With the command:

```
D CC=$ or,
```

```
D CC=$S
```

you can obtain a listing of classification codes used to index documents in the database sorted in numerical order. But with the command:

```
D CT=$WATERS
```

you will obtain a listing of all classification codes containing the term 'water' in the description of the classification code itself. This may be useful in locating classification codes for better searching but should not be confused with the possibility of free-text searching in the Ted database.

(Part C) TD 92 versus TED- ARCHIVE: how does it work?

Since November 1988, ECHO has been offering archive files of TED where information concerning invalid tenders has been transferred. An 'invalid' tender is one whose expiry date has been reached, i.e. the date mentioned in the DT field (Deadline for Tender) has passed. Once the deadline date has been reached, the tender document is then transferred via an 'expiry' procedure from the TED file (former poolkey TD84, now TD92) to the archive file. Each year has its own separate archive file and corresponding poolkey, e.g. the archive files of 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 can be consulted by selecting their corresponding poolkeys: td86; td87; td88; td89. All archive files with the exception of the file concerning the year in progress remain stable. The archive file for 1989 would however be updated every Monday with the invalid tenders from the previous week until the end of the year.



Q M

QUESTION MARK

Advanced access to information: Formulating queries in

As we are gearing ourselves towards the Single Market of 1992, the free-flow of information is recognised as being an all important factor across European frontiers. In preparing for the Information Society of Tomorrow, the European Commission is encouraging the development of information highways necessary to access all available information resources.

Adequate European information services will increasingly contribute to the establishment of a truly prosperous and competitive real common market.

The genius of the computer lies not only in the vast quantities of information that it can store, but in its ability to index it and sort it. If you can ask the right questions, you will get just the answer you need. As far as most online retrieval services are concerned, asking the right question not only means that you have to accurately identify your information needs, but also requires you to be familiar with the retrieval language employed by the host operator in question.

One of the main problems that we face in Europe is that host organisations tend to operate using many different retrieval languages, something that is highly frustrating for the end-user as not every person has the patience or time to become acquainted with the commands of a multitude of retrieval

languages. With this problem in mind, the CEC developed and implemented on the ECHO service a 'standardised' retrieval language called the CCL (Common Command Language) which could be adopted and offered by all host organisations. Now, ECHO is involved in a new project aiming to facilitate access once again for the end user. In collaboration with a French organisation (GSI-ERLI) ECHO is currently developing a system which will enable users to formulate queries in 'natural language' rather than being required to enter a series of retrieval commands. The project will initially deal with the Dianeguide database and should result in the following for the end-user:

- 1) they will have direct access to the information without being required to know a specific retrieval language;
- 2) they will query the system by subject without knowing the controlled terms used to index the Dianeguide;
- 3) they will ask multi-criteria queries in natural language.

Project on DIANEGUIDE access:

The Dianeguide has 2 types of records: DB (databases) and ORG (organisations), with each record type having its own corresponding fields.

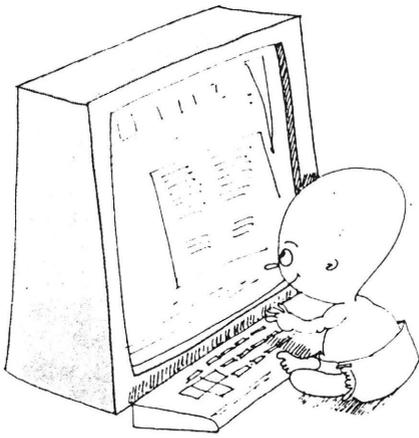
A 'DB' record holds fields such as NA (DB name), TY (DB type: bibliographic; textual; factual..) LA (language of DB), CT (controlled terms expressing DB subject), AB (abstract in free-text expressing content of DB), DBPR (DB producer name), HST (host(s) of DB), etc.

An 'ORG' record holds fields such as NA (ORG name), TY (ORG type: DB producer, host,...), CY (country of ORG), ADDR (ORG address), ACT (activities in free-text of ORG), PRODU (DB produced if ORG is DB producer), DB (DB supplied if ORG is host), NUA (call number if ORG is host), etc.

The advanced access system must be able to cope with eventual queries from end-users concerning databases, database producers and host organisations within a search session.

Linguistic Analysis and Knowledge Representation:

The linguistic analysis carried out by the new system must determine not only the object of the query in question, but also the searchable fields in which the search must be conducted. For example, the new system being designed will process queries such as: a) Databases dealing with British foreign affairs' will be translated as: fetch all DB records with subject relating to 'United Kingdom' and 'diplomacy'. The fields displayed will be: NA (DB name), TY (DB type) SU (subject), AB (abstract), HST (host).



b) 'Which db has numerical data on polymer production?' will be translated as: fetch all DB records having TY=factual and SU='polymer' and 'production'. The fields displayed will be: NA (DB name), TY (DB type), SU (subject), AB (abstract), HST (host).

c) 'Who produces the Agris database?' will be translated as: display all records having amongst PRODU values a dbname = 'Agris'. The fields displayed will be: NA (ORG name), ADDR (address), TEL (telephone no.), PRODU (databases produced by this ORG), CP (contact person), and CPTel (contact persons tel. no.).

d) 'Where is ECHO located?' will be translated as: fetch all ORG records having NA=ECHO. The fields displayed will be: NA (ORG name), ADDR (address), TEL (telephone no.), NUA (call number), CY (country), CP (contact person), and CPTel (contact persons tel. no.).

This kind of analysis represents quite a new approach compared with the way in which traditional information retrieval systems operate.

To realize such a system, a large number of conceptual and technical problems must be solved, for e.g., enough knowledge must be fed into

the system in order for it to 'understand' all queries, and secondly, a complicated hardware and software architecture must be designed in order to allow the quick processing of this kind of natural language query.

Knowledge incorporated into the system:

A 'linguistic knowledge base' includes 'lexical information', i.e. information concerning words (grammatical category, inflexions, spelling variants, derivative forms, analogy, synonymy), and 'semantic information', i.e. information concerning the concepts used in order to describe the application entities (e.g. 'English' is a language, 'Greece' is a country, 'politics' may be a database subject, is broader than 'diplomacy' and at the same time can be related to 'economics'....).

Different phases of the analysis:

The entire analysis from start through to end takes one through a series of processing tasks such as:

- 1) the 'morphological analysis', i.e. the identification of all words and phrases that together make up the query;
- 2) the 'syntactic-semantic analysis' which identifies the function of each word and phrase and the way in which they should be understood;
- 3) the 'lexical analysis' which tries to substitute one word with another (using analogy links) in order to retrieve a normalized concept;
- 4) 'normalization' of the query;
- 5) translation of the query into the GRIPS-CCL retrieval language.

Following a feasibility study and the realization of 2 demonstration prototypes (in January and May 1989), GSI-ERLI plans to implement the first pilot-version of the system in September 1989. A final report concerning this experimental project will be available at ECHO by the beginning of 1990.

For further information on this project, please contact the ECHO Customer Service (Mr. Roland Haber), or Mr. Pierre Le LOARER, GSI-ERLI, 72 quai des Carrieres, F-94220 CHARENTON, FRANCE.
Tel: +33-1-4893 8121;
Fax: + 33-1-43757979;
Tlx: 264013

Order Coupon

I am interested in receiving a copy of the new 'Videotex' and 'Micro-computer' brochure at the below-mentioned address: (available in October/November depending on language version)

Name: _____

Address: _____

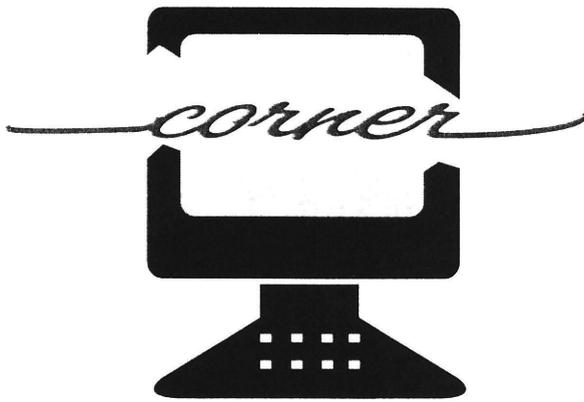
The language in which I would like to receive the above is:

En/ Fr/ De/ Du/ It/
Sp/ Pt/ Dk/ Gr/

I am a registered ECHO User:
Y/N

LINE-FEED Problems

ECHO is currently working on the multiple line-feed problems experienced by some users, especially those located within the United Kingdom. It is NOT normal for users to receive an 'extra' blank line following each line transmitted. In order to facilitate this task, we would invite all users that have recently experienced line-feed problems when connecting up to Echo to send us a description of their hardware and telecommunications software and if possible a print-out of a search session. We may then use this information as a basis for conducting tests on our software in the future.



Computer News Corner

New Computer for ECHO:

ECHO is pleased to announce that from mid October onwards Users will be able to enjoy the benefits of a more powerful computer. This change has been deemed necessary due to the increasing number of experiments in which ECHO is becoming involved and also because of plans to implement various new types of services in the near future. Users should not be affected by the change other than by obtaining improved response times from the system. We hope that the change-over will run smoothly and that no service interruptions will

occur. Together with the new computer, we shall also be implementing a new range of software which will allow ECHO to play its role as a host demonstrating advanced access and distribution of information. One of the software packages will for example enable ECHO to increase its communication with and connectivity to other computers and/or services (X400).

In future, please look out for the 'computer news' section of the newsletter for further information on system developments, changes, additions, etc..

New subscriber

I am not a registered (*) ECHO user but would like to receive the Echo News on a regular basis:

Name _____

Address _____

New address:

I have had a recent change of address. (The address label with my former address is attached):

Name _____ User Number: _____

Address _____

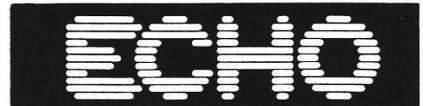
* Please note that all registered ECHO users are automatically added to this mailing list.

Diary dates

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

Exhibitions:

Thessalonika	09-18/09/89 THESSALONIKA FAIR
Bari	08-18/09/89 FIERA DI LEVANTE
Paris	19-22/09/89 INFODIAL
Liège	25-29/09/89 POWER STATIONS
Lisbon	27-29/09/89 EXPOLINGUA
Geneva	03-08/10/89 ITU-COM
Stockholm	05-06/10/89 STOCKHOLM ONLINE
Milan	05-09/10/89 SMAU
Birmingham	10-12/10/89 TECHMART
Creteil	11-12/10/89 UNIV. PARIS XII
Munich	16-20/10/89 SYSTEMS '89
Toulouse	16-22/10/89 SITEF
Grenoble	18/10/89 C.C.I.
Hannover	17-19/10/89 INFO-EUROPE
Luxembourg	24-27/10/89 BUREAUTECH



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