

# INTERCONTACT

On-line information system on international organizations and conferences using information managed by the Union of International Associations.

*Documentation prepared for an online presentation of the system - using the DOCU/MASTER software- for the UAI Associate Members annual meeting, Brussels 21st September 1981.*

## SUMMARY

Intercontact is the first on-line information system on international organizations and conferences in all domains. The information is provided by the Union of International Associations as part of its function since 1910 as a clearinghouse for such information (cf. Yearbook of International Organizations, International Congress Calendar, etc). The system under test contains information on 11,400 organizations and 7,500 conferences representing a total of 1,174,000 words of which 910,953 are individually indexed, whether in English or other working languages. The information would be accessible world-wide, directly or via telex, at an unprecedented level of detail through use of the DOCU/MASTER retrieval software implemented by SLIGOS Benelux on an ITEL AS5 computer. Decision on the final implementation is currently under review.

## PART I : GENERAL OUTLINE

### 1. NEED FOR AN ON-LINE INFORMATION SYSTEM

#### 1.1. Information explosion

It is unnecessary to comment on this widely reported phenomenon. As an example, the 1981 edition of the Yearbook of International Organization lists 11,800 bodies, compared to 8,000 in the last English edition in 1979. Given the constraints and costs of recording information on paper, it is frequently impossible to reproduce information which is readily available - unless advantage is taken of the limitless capacity of information systems. The Union of International Associations, for example, has card files on meetings going back many decades which it has never been possible to render accessible by conventional means.

#### 1.2. Need for information

Accompanying the information explosion is a proliferation of new needs for information which cannot be adequately met by conventional information tools.

#### 1.3. Urgency

The new needs for information are now matched by impatience with the time delays associated with reproduction on paper. In addition much information on international organizations and meetings has a useful life which is shorter than the periodicity of paper-based documents.

#### 1.4. Revolution in information technology

It is unnecessary to comment on this widely reported phenomenon. It is sufficient to note that many bodies working in relation to the international community of organizations are now using, or planning to use, some form of terminal-oriented information system.

#### 1.5. Data bank society

The spread of on-line data banks is a widely reported phenomenon, whether it be reservation systems, documentation systems, or

others. It is vital that information on the international community of organizations keep pace with the emergence of the « information society ».

#### 1.6. New questions

The complexity and interdependence of social sectors, previously considered in isolation, has resulted in a proliferation of new kinds of question which users need to ask. These questions cut across the categories which have been traditionally used to order information in printed publications. Users want to formulate their own questions and are frustrated by imposed categories. It is only in on-line systems that users can be provided with a new level of flexibility.

#### 1.7. New users

The possibility of asking new kinds of question creates new kinds of users whose needs cannot be met by information ordered in conventional ways.

## 1.8. Cost factors

The next of using on-line systems is now at a level where a potential user must seriously assess the advantages of such a facility as compared with the costs and de-

lays of obtaining the information in other ways - or doing without it.

## 1.9. Next step in service provided by UAI

It was only by converting to computer-based production of publi-

cations that the UAI was able to maintain the level of service provided by its Yearbook. An on-line service provides a logical complement to the continued production of the Yearbook for the reasons outlined above.

## 2. BACKGROUND TO THE INTERCONTACT SYSTEM

### 2.1. Information

The Union of International Associations acts as the focal point for information on international organizations and conferences. This information has appeared for many years in two complementary publications and their supplements :

1. Yearbook of International Organizations (19th ed. 1981) which contains descriptive entries on 11,830 internationally-oriented bodies,
2. International Congress Calendar (21st ed, 1981) which contains descriptive entries on 4,000 future international meetings (usually sponsored by the organizations described in the Yearbook),
3. Supplements to both of the above publications appear, between editions, in the periodical Transnational Associations (6 per year).

### 2.2. Computerization

- 2.2.1. The information for the production of the above publications,

together with additions / amendments, is encoded via a terminal in the UAI Secretariat onto permanent files. Publications processed in this way include :

1. Yearbook of International Organizations, since the 1972 edition,
  2. Annuaire des Organisations Internationales, since the 1974 edition,
  3. Yearbook of World Problems and Human Potential, for the 1976 edition,
  4. International Congress Calendar, for the 1981 edition,
  5. Supplements to the Calendar for 1981.
- 2.2.2. The permanent computer files are held, under contract to UAI, by SLIGOS Benelux on magnetic tapes which permit :
    1. Proof listings to be generated for editorial amendment,
    2. Standardized checks on the data to be performed by computer.
    3. Various by-products to be extracted, using any of pro-

grammes (e.g. mail-addresses, statistical tables, etc),

4. Extraction and management of working indexes.

- 2.2.3. Production tapes from SLIGOS are currently processed by COMPUTAPRINT (London) to generate off-set film via computer controlled photocomposition procedures, together with extraction of final indexes.

### 2.3. Evolution to on-line processing

The possibility of on-line processing has been explored in discussions between UAI and SLIGOS since 1978. In September 1980, UAI and SLIGOS entered into partnership to computerize the International Congress Calendar in order to maintain an on-line information system on international conferences. The international organization information already on computer files was to be incorporated into this system. Since May 1981, SLIGOS has been testing the system with the two sets of information.

## 3. NATURE OF THE INTERCONTACT SYSTEM

### 3.1. Coverage

- 3.1.1. In its current test phase, the Intercontact system contains the information which appears in the :
  - Yearbook of International Organizations and includes historically meeting information prior to the date for the calendar,
  - International Congress CalendarSupplements to these publications

- 3.1.2. -Transnational Action Yellowpages (Subject thesaurus).
- 3.1.3. Other categories of information can be added at any stage according to demand (and when funds permit) for example :
  - national member organizations
  - Statutes
  - world problem descriptions (already encoded)
  - French-language organization descriptions (already encoded).

of a terminal, various other compromise procedures are possible (telex, post, etc) as detailed in a later section.

- 3.2.2. On-line consultation means that the user formulates one or more appropriate questions which he types into his terminal. After a short delay, the reply is displayed on his terminal under the response.
- 3.2.3. For an on-line system to be convenient to users, it is essential that they should be - protected - from both the obscurities of computer jargon and from the complexity of the search procedures required. This is achieved by using a suitable « software package », in this case the DOCUMASTER package developed by Turnkey Systems Inc

- 3.1.2. Before it is made fully operational, it is expected that additional features will be added as the result of the production of the :  
Directory of National Participation in International Organization (Country membership)

### 3.2. Consultation of Intercontact

- 3.2.1. The above information can be consulted on-line, namely over a telephone line via a terminal in the user's office. In the absence

(USA) (This is currently used to store and retrieve all information appearing in the New York Times). A main advantage of using such packages is that they have been thoroughly tested and contain many sophisticated features which it would not otherwise be economically possible to provide.

3.2.4. How the DOCU/MASTER package is used is discussed in the next section.

### 3.3. Index

3.3.1. The real power of the DOCU/MASTER retrieval system lies in its index.

3.3.2. Every word and number in the Yearbook of International Organ-Congress Calendar is indexed (with the exception of some 50 articles or prepositions).

3.3.3. The index at present contains 910,953 words.

3.3.4. Indexed words may also be retrieved via their synonyms, if these have been defined.

### 3.4. Language

3.4.1. At present the information on organizations and meetings is in English, with the exception of organization and meeting names (in French, German, Dutch, Spanish and other languages). Any such non-English words may be used as a basis for consulting the system.

3.4.2. The DOCU/MASTER system does permit French and other-language equivalents of the English terms indexed to be incorporated as synonyms if this is justified by demand.

3.4.3. If necessary, the French version of the Yearbook (already encoded) could also be held by the Intercontact system. This development would probably have to be separately funded.

3.4.4. The DOCU/MASTER commands can also be formulated in other languages, if necessary.

### 3.5. Off-line replies

3.5.1. Users may formulate questions which give rise to lengthy replies (e.g. a list of all the organizations with members in Italy). In such cases it may be more economic for the user to indicate to the computer that the list should be produced at a lower cost rate in Brussels and dispatched from there by post.

3.5.2. A similar procedure would be used for users without a terminal.

## 4. HOW TO CONSULT THE INTERCONTACT SYSTEM

4.1. The DOCU/MASTER software is designed to appear exceptionally simple to users. There is one basic command FIND, which the user employs to specify whatever term(s) he considers significant in the meetings or organizations in which he is interested. For example : FIND agriculture or forestry not food and 1983.

4.2. On the basis of the FIND command, the computer replies with an indication of how many meetings or organizations («documents ») meet the criteria specified in the FIND command.

4.3. The user may then choose :

- to display one or more of the « documents » found,
- to scan the documents found by computer for particular combinations of words or dates.
- to sort the documents, before displaying them,
- or to ask a more detailed series of questions to reduce the number of documents further.

4.4. Because of the exceptional ease with which questions can be formulated, it is up to the user to develop a search strategy which will

best enable him to locate the kinds of information he is looking for.

4.5. A more detailed overview of how to use the system is given in Part II.

4.6. A more detailed review of search strategies is given in Part IV.

4.7. In addition to the questions possible within the basic DOCU/MASTER framework, programmes can be developed on demand to permit more sophisticated searches.

## 5. USERS OF THE INTERCONTACT SYSTEM

5.1. The Intercontact system is designed to be of service to a variety of users including :

- governments, embassies
- intergovernmental agencies
- foundations and funding agencies
- conference services and organizers
- tourism services
- travel services
- international organization research

- international action campaigns
- international publication distributors
- library and documentation services
- international organizations in general.

5.2. Users may participate in the system in a variety of ways, including simple consultation, systematic searches, supply of new information, direct entry and quality control of new information, subsidy of certain user categories, etc.

5.3. To distinguish between categories of users, the data bases they are each permitted to consult, and whether they are authorized to amend some portion of the contents, a system of confidential passcodes is used.

5.4. In order to kind the inclusion of new categories of information, users may constitute themselves into « user clubs » with privileged access to the information *m* which they have invested. The same procedure may be used to fund special search programmes.

5.5. Complex organizations (such as the EEC Of UN groups) can also use the system to store and retrieve information on internal

meetings for which access is restricted to divisions of the organization itself or to a limited number of member governments. Such

sub-sets of information can be used for scheduling interrelated meetings, facility requirements and calendar development.

## 6. POTENTIAL OF THE INTERCONTACT SYSTEM

6.1. The Intercontact system is a unique initiative to provide worldwide on-line access to the many interacting bodies of the highly dynamic international community of organizations and their associated meetings.

6.2. Of major significance to the potential of Intercontact is the deliberate effort to ensure its accessibility to users whether in a computer-oriented environment or who are at present only able to work with telex or the postal system.

6.3. On-line access to information on the international community of organizations sets the stage for a further development which is essential to the quality of the information stored. The range and status of users must be extended to enable them to use the Inter-

contact system to amend, add and exchange information through the on-line system (as is done in airline reservation systems). This step is vital to the elimination of the present delays resulting from dependence on postal services and publication cycles. The Intercontact system is thus the first step towards creating an information environment within which international organizations and associated conference and other service bodies interact in response to each others needs.

6.4. The real potential of Intercontact lies in the manner whereby it can be extended with further categories of data increasing significance to the day-to-day operations of international organizations. These bodies will then become directly involved in rapid

update and additions to such information as a way of facilitating their own activities. The Intercontact system would then function as a dynamic evolving model of the international community - a major step beyond the series of static images which are at present available.

6.5. In a time of revolutionary innovation and crisis in a system of increasing complexity, it is astounding that no effort has yet been made to benefit from the revolution in information technology to order understanding of the full range of bodies attempting to act in response to this social crisis. Intercontact could have a major role to play in providing a necessary minimum degree of operational coherence in the overwhelming variety of international activities.

## PART II USE OF INTERCONTACT VIA A TERMINAL

### 1. ACCESS TO DATA BASE (AND TERMINATION)

1.1. The communication link is first established via the telephone or data network, from the user to the data base in Brussels. The number used on the telephone gives direct access to the computer.

1.2. User then requests the DOCU-MASTER programme as follows (\*)

#### COMPUTER RESPONSE

**docu**

DM661 DOCU/MASTER STARTED

Note : Both on the computer and in these explanations, the user questions and commands appear in small letters, and the computer replies appear in capitals

1.3. User then requests the Meeting/Organization data base using the START command, and specifying the name of the data base (provisionally called DEMO) and the user's confidential password (provisionally UAJNT). Without an au-

thorized code a user cannot gain access to the data base. The code also determines whether the user has only the right to consult the data base, or some part of it, or whether he has also the right to update it.

start demo for uajnt

If an invalid code is used, the result is as follows :

start demo for OP1

DM 127 AUTHORIZATION ERROR  
- INVALID OPERATOR OR INVALID  
DATABASE

1.4. The Meeting/Organization data base (DEMO) at present consists of two sub-data bases, provisionally named as follows :  
E 1 Meetings (being the collection of meetings from the International Congress Calendar. 1981 edition)  
E 2 Organizations (being the collection of organizations from the

Yearbook of International Organizations. 1981 edition)

To gain access to these sub-data bases, the user employs the SELECT command, which will be accepted if he is authorized to use the data bases :  
select e1/e2

1.5. The above procedure enables the user to formulate search inquiries. If however a user who is only authorized to make such inquiries, then attempts to SELECT the update mode in order to modify the data base contents, this will be refused as follows :  
select update  
DM 138 OPERATOR NOT AUTHORIZED FOR UPDATE.

1.6. The user may at any time terminate his use of the data base by use of the STOP command.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF SEARCH AND DISPLAY PROCEDURES

### 2.1. Search procedures

2.1.1. FIND is the basic command whereby a search of the data base is initiated. The command must specify one or more searchwords, and may also specify the name of the sub-data base to be searched (e.g. E1 for Meetings) :

```
find e2 and sport and handicapped
11336FIND E2
65 AND SPORT (78)
I AND HANDICAPPED (64)
```

In this example, the computer replies to the request by indicating that there were 11336 documents, in this case organization descriptions, in E2 which is the Organizations sub-data base. In addition the reply indicates that of the 78 indexed references to « sport », 65 were in E2. And of the 64 indexed references to « handicapped », only 1 is in an E2 document with « sport ».

The search has now been completed and the document could be displayed if desired (see 2.3)

2.1.2. Instead of using AND to connect the searchwords, it is possible to use OR or NOT :

```
find e1 and agriculture or forestry but not food
4746 FIND E1
116 AND AGRICULTURE
(281)
150 OR FORESTRY
58 NOT FOOD (291)
```

This result shows that there are 58 documents (in this case Meetings) which refer to « forestry » and « agriculture » not to « food »

2.1.3. To facilitate searching, some words have been defined as synonyms. If « conference » is used as a searchword, then documents containing « symposium » will also be found :

```
find e2 and conference and towns but not europe
11336FIND E2
978 AND CONFERENCE
(SYMPOSIUM,
2791)
4 AND TOWNS (43)
3 NOT EUROPE (852)
```

2.1.4. Where various possible word endings exist, only the beginning of the searchword needs to be specified, provided it is followed by a hyphen

```
find e2 and medic- and africa- but not europ-
11336FIND E2
535 AND MEDIC (777)
143 AND AFRICA
(1434)
101 NOT EUROP
(2885)
```

2.1.5. Some items of special significance

in the data base are marked by prefixes. At present these are as follows, with the three letter code indicating how they are labelled within the data base :

```
meeting = DAT
meeting town = VIL
meeting city = PAY
meeting participants = PAR
organization number = ORG
```

When used in specifying a searchword, the prefix ensures that the word will only be found in the context specified ;

```
find e1 and vil : London but not pay; UK
4746 FIND E1
207 AND VIL : LONDON (207)
2 NOT PAY : UK (454)
```

This result indicates that the meeting town « London » has been found in 207 Meetings of which only 2 concern a « London » which is not in the meeting country « UK » (namely, as the display would show, meetings in London. Canada).

2.1.6. For those items which have been prefixed as indicated above, searches can also be made for alphabetic or numeric ranges (e.g. ranges of dates or numbers of participants) :

```
find e1 and europe and par : 2000 thru par : 3000
4746 FIND E1
131 AND EUROPE (852)
0 AND PAR : 2000 THRU
PAR : 3000 (139)
DM 277 ZERO RESULT IGNORED
```

This result indicates that no Meetings were found for the indicated range of participants for meetings containing the mention « Europe ». (Note it would have been preferable to have used « Europe » - as the searchword)

2.1.7. The user must decide, once a search like those above has been completed, whether the number of documents indicated is short

enough to warrant display (discussed under 2.3, below), or whether a more detailed series of questions should be asked to identify a smaller sub-set of documents for display. A search initiated in any of the above ways may be further narrowed by continuing the search:

```
find e1 and par: 1000 thru par: 1500
4746 FIND E1
298 AND PAR : 1000 THRU
PAR: 1500(298)
but not europe-
259 NOT EUROPE (2830)
249 NOT AMERICA (1774)
and pay : japan
15 AND PAY : JAPAN (1 21 )
but not vil : tokyo
6 NOT VIL: TOKYO (76)
```

2.1.8. Instead of narrowing down the search progressively, as described in 2.1.7, the user may choose to insert all his searchwords into one single request. This may contain several lines of AND constraints : find e2 and students and Christian and catholic- and social and university and political and values

```
13336FIND E2
196 AND STUDENTS (222)
AND CHRISTIAN (254)
8 AND CATHOLIC (210)
4 AND SOCIAL (697)
AND UNIVERSITY (990)
AND CRITICAL (19)
1 AND VALUES (48)
```

### 2.2. Sorting and scanning search results (Before display)

2.2.1. Before actually displaying the documents, the user may wish to have them sorted. The sort can only be done on searchwords which have been prefixed, which at present means : meeting date, meeting town, meeting country, meeting participants, and organization reference number. For example, using the result of 2.1.7 above :

```
sort vil : 5, dat : 6
DM 527 00006 DOCS HAVE
BEEN SORTED
```

Here the user requested that the documents be sorted by date within town, specifying that the sort should be made on 5 characters of the town name and 6 characters of the date (which is in the form 810625, for 25 June 1981)

2.2.2. Before actually displaying the documents, the user may wish to have them scanned for certain combinations of words (or dates), possibly in a specified order, as indicated by the example from 2.2.1 : in paragraph ministry and government in order

IN PARAGRAPH MINISTRY, GOVERNMENT SPECIFIED ARGUMENTS FOUND IN :  
00 OF TOTAL 006 DOCUMENTS  
0000 TOTAL NO OF OCCURRENCES

This indicates that « ministry » and « government » are not present in the 6 documents in the order « ministry... govt ».

The scan may be repeated without the order constraint :  
in paragraph ministry and government

IN PARAGRAPH MINISTRY, GOVERNMENT SPECIFIED ARGUMENTS FOUND IN :  
01 OF TOTAL 006 DOCUMENTS  
0001 TOTAL NO. OF OCCURRENCES

This indicates that « ministry » and « government » have been found in 1 of the 6 documents. An extract may be displayed :

#### MINISTRY/GOVERNMENT

FOUND IN DNO: 0001617 LNO 0001

78

SECRETARIAT OF IUFRO, C/O'GOVERNMENT FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION. ' MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, MATSUNOSATO 1, KUKIZAKI-MURA, INASHIKI-GUN, IBARAKI 300 12, JAPAN

## 2.3. Displaying search results

2.3.1. One or more documents (e.g. meeting or organization descriptions) resulting from the above search requests and any subsequent sort or scan may be displayed using the DISPLAY command (or the ENTER key on the terminal). Example of a single meeting document :

0000563

E1

830433-0533

ARGENTINA

BARILOCHE

A0396 - LATIN AMERICAN CONFEDERATION OF TOURIST ORGANIZATIONS ANNUAL CONGRESS

TOURISM

2500

3000

50

EX

LATIN AMERICAN CONFEDERATION OF

TOURIST ORGANIZATIONS, VIAMONTE 640, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA.

Example of a 2-page organization document :

0005150

E2

A0727

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF CONFERENCE TOWNS (EFCT)  
FEDERATION EUROPEENNE DES VILLES DE CONGRES (FEUC) - EUROPAISCHE VEREINIGUNG DER KONGRESSSTADTE - FEDERACION EUROPEA DE CIUDADES DE CONGRESOS EXEC SEC : RITA DE LANDTSHEER, RUE AUX LAINES 1, B-1000 BRUXELLES, BELGIUM. T. 452 98 30. TX B BRU B 63245.

PRES : HENK BORGMAN, MARTINI HAL CENTRE, ZUIDERLANSTADSPARK, PO BOX 8010, NL-GRONINGEN, NETHERLANDS, T, 26 2826. TX 53 548. FOUNDED : 20 NOU 1964. BRUSSELS, A WORKING PARTY HAVING BEEN SET UP ON 27 NOV 1963. BRUSSELS. FORMERLY KNOWN AS EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF CONGRESS TOWNS.

AIMS : BRING TOGETHER ELIGIBLE EUROPEAN TOWNS DESIROUS OF ACTING AS VENUES FOR CONGRESSES; FACILITATE MUTUAL EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND PUBLICATION OF SPECIALIZED STUDIES; COLLABORATE WITH OFFICIAL INSTITUTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED WITH ORGANIZATION OF CONGRESSES; PROMOTE EUROPE AS A WHOLE AND EACH EUROPEAN MEMBER TOWN AS A LEADING CONFERENCE DESTINATION.

LANGUAGES: ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, FINANCE: ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF MEMBER TOWNS. GENERAL MEETINGS: 7 UP TO 1970; FLORENCE 1972, FRANKFURT 1973, MONTREUX

1974, BARCELONA 1974, BRIGHTON 1975, KNOKKE 1976, ZAGREB 1977, GRONINGEN 1978, LISBON 1979, TEL AVIV 1980, SALZBURG 1981, NICOSIA 1982 NGO RELATIONS : INT ASN OF CHF INTERPRETERS (AIC); INT ASN OF CNG CNTE (AIPC); INT ASN OF PROFESSIONAL CNG ORGANIZERS (IAPCO); INT ONG AND CONVENTION ASN (ICCA); UNION OF INT ASNS (UAI).

PUBLICATIONS : GREEN BOOK OF TECHNICAL CARDS DESCRIBING THE FACILITIES OF MEMBER TOWNS; TECHNICAL DIRECTORY (1980).

MEMBERS; TOWNS (63) IN 17 COUNTRIES :

EU ; AUSTRIA (3), BELGIUM (5), CYPRUS, DENMARK (2), FRANCE (8), GERMANY FR, GREECE (2), ITALY (4), MONACO, NETHERLANDS (6), NORWAY, PORTUGAL, SPAIN (5) SWEDEN (2), SWITZERLAND (7), UK (8), YUGOSLAVIA (6).

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS (3) IN 1 COUNTRY :

AS : ISRAEL (3).

2.3.2. To control the number of documents displayed, the user may employ such commands as :

display 3 documents  
or display all documents  
or display next document

2.3.4. To control the number of lines to be displayed in a document, the user may employ such commands as :

display all lines  
or display first lines  
or display lines 1 thru 3

2.3.5. To control the number of lines to be displayed for a series of documents, the user may employ such

set all lines  
or set 4 lines

2.3.6. To display any portion of the index,

the user proceeds as follows :

index etudiant  
1 ETUDIANT  
3 ETUDIANTE  
64 ETUDIANTS  
1 ETUDIANTS/STUDENT  
2 ETUDIET  
1 ETUG  
1 ETYNOLOGICAL  
1 ETZ  
2617 EU  
1 EU : AUSTRIA  
1 EUBL  
1 EUBS  
1 EUBW

Here the user has requested the index from « etudiant » onwards. The number of occurrences of each word is given. Note that every word in UAI Calendar and Yearbook has been indexed, with the exception of such common words as articles and prepositions. This currently makes a total of 910.953 words.

2.3.7. Display on paper : If the user wants a copy on paper of what appears on the terminal screen, he may use a special key on the terminal to transfer the information onto his hardcopy device immediately.

2.3.8. Display on paper of long lists : The user may prefer that long lists be made onto paper at his request via the high-speed printer in Brussels (and then sent to him by post). The user can request such lists by using a special key on the terminal, D