BAUDY BITS... COLUMN OF ON LINE NEWS

AS PART OF the MIDAS first birthday celebrations, OTC hosted a management information seminar on 20 May. Representatives from Control Data Corporation, I. F. Sharp, Infomedia and Insearch DIAL Services demonstrated a range of databases and communications techniques available to management.

In his concluding remarks, George Maltby of OTC mentioned two likely developments in the MIDAS service this year. OTC are currently negotiating with US carriers in an attempt to reduce MIDAS charges. During 1980 it is also hoped that access to European networks will be achieved.

Brian Callaghan encourages all MIDAS users with complaints about difficulties in accessing MIDAS during peak morning and afternoon periods to write to him. Any increase in MIDAS capabilities will be aided by user feedback on these sorts of problems.

Telecom Australia have recently announced that plans to introduce a digital data network and packet switching have been brought forward to the end of 1982. This will mean that the same types of savings and advantages offered by the overseas MIDAS service are available in Australia. An implication for Australian networks is that overseas users will be able to access them at competitive rates. Therefore it will be important that Australian databases are a marketable proposition by 1982 to take advantage of these developments.

Logica, a leading computer and communications consultancy, has been commissioned by the British Post Office to arrange the international marketing trial of the Prestel service.

Australia has been allocated 30 terminals for the trial, and both business and government agencies are among the participants. For more information about Prestel see elsewhere this issue.

DIALOG users may have been having problems in recent months in accessing the system during its advertised hours of availability,

particularly in the last hour of the morning period (ie between 12 noon and 1 pm, Sydney time).

Chronolog of April 1980 (vol8, no4, p8) notes that access to DIALOG is divided between its two IBM computers. It then goes on to say that System B, Telenet, has a few hours less accessible time per day than System A, Tymnet. In fact, this should read in reverse – DIALOG is available via Telenet for more hours than it is via Tymnet. In effect, between 12 noon and 1 pm Sydney time, DIALOG is *only* available via Telenet.

Chronolog also warns that there may be some problems using Tymnet in the next month owing to their upgrading their hardware to increase the power and number of routes in the network.

A recent complaint about MIDAS access recently also revealed that there have been some problems with the RCA and ITT carriers and this may have affected access to the system.

Users of Tymnet and Telenet via MIDAS should not be concerned over the different costs of these systems per connect hour. Remember that what we pay for in Australia is MIDAS time, which is the same whichever system you use – ie $12 per connect hour plus 60c per thousand characters transmitted in either direction.

ANSTEL is making available an application kit for the MEDLINE network. This package of information contains not only the application form itself, but includes some very useful material on online information retrieval, background history of MEDLINE, sample searches and other information which can help you to decide whether membership of the network is appropriate.

Occasional or casual users of MEDLINE and BIOSIS should note: 'In the case of organisations whose staff or clientele have a continuing professional interest in medical or biological information, ANSTEL makes it a condition of network membership that their search analysts particpate in an initial one-week training course followed two or three months later by a one-day refresher course. This is to ensure that biomedical professionals receive the best possible service from their local network centre.

'With organisations outside the biomedical area who want access to network databases for the occasional biomedical query, we are concerned that what use they make of the systems is efficient and not wasteful of expensive computing resources. If there is sufficient interest, ANSTEL will conduct one or two-day introductory courses for casual users in Sydney and Melbourne in August or early September and later in the year in other state capitals.'

ANSTEL would be pleased to hear from organisations interested in using MEDLINE and BIOSIS on a casual basis. In particular, they would like to know how much use they expect to make of the systems and how much online experience they have had. These details will assist in designing an appropriate training program. Interested persons should contact: Paul Hodgson, Acting Principal Librarian, Life Sciences Section, ANSTEL, National Library of Australia, Canberra 2600.

Contributions to this column should be sent to Katie Blake, PO Box J36, Brickfield Hill, NSW 2000, (02) 26 6344.

LAA/NZLA Conference Enrol Now

REGISTRATION FORMS for the Association's next conference – the LAA/NZLA Combined Conference in Christchurch, January 1981 are now available. Your registration form is included in this issue of *Incite*, and additional forms are available from your Branch Secretary or the LAA office.

Closing date for enrolments is 31 October 1980, but you will need to enrol as soon as possible to get the accommodation and dinner bookings you want. Please note that all amounts on the booking form are in NZ currency. You may pay in either NZ currency, by a bank draft, or by cheque in Australian currency. Please obtain the current exchange rate from your bank when making out your cheque. Don't forget to keep a photocopy of your registration form for future reference.

If you have not already made your travel arrangements, we suggest you do so immediately. It was announced on 13 June that air fares have been increased once already and that they will be increased at an indexed rate in September and again in December. You should book and pay now to avoid these inevitable increases.

If you have any queries about registering for the Conference, please feel free to call the LAA office. For your travel enquiries, however, you should contact your state's Ansett office, or your travel agent. Travel booking forms were included with *Incite* no8.

Look forward to seeing you in Christchurch.

NB There is one printing error we have detected on the information brochure. On the back page, Tour no5, the 13-day Golden Holiday Tour departs from Christchurch on 25 January 1981 and returns to Auckland, not Christchurch, on 6 February 1981.

News from the schools

Sydney Technical College

COMMENCING on July 1980, Sydney Technical College will be offering two short courses, *Audiovisual Materials and Equipment I* and *Photography for Library Technicians,* for single subject enrolment. These are two subjects in the new Library Technician Certificate course, which started this year. *Audiovisual Materials and Equipment I* will be for three hours a week for one semester, and *Photography for Library Technicians* will be for two hours a week for one semester.

Other subjects in the course, such as *Audiovisual Materials and Equipment II, Display and Publicity* and *Computers in Libraries*, are expected to be available for single subject enrolment in 1981.

Application forms will be available at the beginning of June from the TAFE Information Centre, 849 George Street, Broadway, or from Miss M. Harnett, Senior Head Teacher of Library Practice, School of General Studies, Sydney Technical College (building 52), cnr Mary Ann St and Bulwara Rd, Ultimo.

Any member of a library staff may apply. However, the number of places is limited.