♲EPA

Public Access:
A "How To" Guide

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I. INTRODUCTION

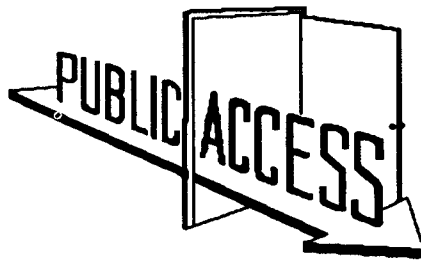Over the last several years, EPA has been experiencing an increase in demand from the public for information maintained by the Agency. In order to meet this demand, EPA's offices have been responding in a variety of ways, including using information centers, clearinghouses, dockets, hotlines, and databases to make this information available. The Office of Information Resources Management (OIRM), in its role as National Program Manager for Public Access, has been promoting coordination and enhancement of these public access activities to increase efficiency in providing information. This Public Access guide is another one of the steps that OIRM is taking to promote this increased efficiency.

Definition of Public Access

As defined in EPA's Public Access Principles, a draft copy of which is included in Appendix A, public access and dissemination enhance the ability of concerned parties to obtain information generated, collected, maintained, and stored by the government. For EPA this definition includes:

- Responding to hard copy or electronic requests for information from one of the Agency's information sources

- Disseminating, or distributing, solicited and unsolicited information to the public or to publicly available sources.

The public is a very broad term that is used to describe the following:

- Citizens

- Federal, state, local, tribal, and international governments

- Specific interest groups, such as health organizations, trade associations, and environmental groups

- Academia and the research community

- Industry and the regulated community

- Press.

Currently, the primary users of EPA information are those audiences who can interpret the vast amounts of technical information collected and maintained by the Agency. Therefore, the smallest user of environmental information is the general public although demand from this audience is continuing to increase.

Background

EPA's current Public Access Program is an informal network of individual systems and services primarily maintained and operated by program offices. The systems and services facilitate access and dissemination to paper-based and electronic information. The four main objectives of EPA's Public Access Program, as defined in the August 6, 1991, Public Access Strategy Document are to enable EPA to:

- Better understand its audiences

- Reach the public in the most effective and efficient manner

- Make quality data available to the public, within available resources, and ensure confidentiality of sensitive information

- Coordinate its public access initiatives at all levels in the Agency so as to improve efficiency and service.

EPA's Public Access Program has used various means to promote achievement of these objectives. These means include developing the Public Access Status Document, a document which describes ongoing public access efforts and which identifies issues confronting managers with regard to public access. The Program also sponsored Public Access Forums for Headquarters senior managers in the Fall of 1990. At these forums, senior managers discussed various public access issues and provided suggestions on how EPA should address these issues. Other Public Access Program activities have included:

- Sponsoring an interagency committee on public access to share information on how each agency is addressing public access issues and providing information to the public

- Developing the *Access EPA* series, a directory of EPA information sources.

- Developing another document entitled *Public Information Access,* abstracts of articles on general public access issues

Throughout these activities, several common themes have emerged. One of these themes involves the need for practical information that could be used in initiating or enhancing public access efforts. Practical and useful information has been identified as critical for assisting Headquarters, Regional, and Laboratory offices in more efficiently providing information to the public.

Benefits

EPA's Public Access Program, including its principles, strategy document, forums, and this guide offer many benefits to EPA, including the following:

- Promote attainment of EPA's environmental mission

- Ensure fulfillment of federal requirements for public access

- Improve the public's ability to obtain EPA's information, thus strengthening EPA's relationship with the public

- Encourage a proactive response to demands for information

- Promote efficient handling of requests for information within EPA.

Information contained in this guide will assist users to address public access issues efficiently and effectively and to realize the maximum benefits from these efforts.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide EPA managers in all offices with practical, implementation-oriented information to assist with initiating or enhancing existing public access efforts. The purpose will be accomplished through:

- Providing information to complement EPA's Public Access Principles

- Outlining information to assist with defining users and their needs

- Providing practical information to assist with responding to public requests for information. This document provides practical information through:

    - Informing staff of relevant policies, procedures, and other public access information

    - Serving as a reference tool for locating information within EPA

    - Promoting information sharing across offices.

- Providing a contact list for quick reference to public access experts and an acronym list (included in the Appendix of this guide).

In defining the format and content of this guide, numerous interviews were conducted with EPA Headquarters, Regional, and Laboratory staff. This document reflects the suggestions expressed in these interviews. The Office of Communication, Education, and Public Affairs (OCEPA) has also produced a document which complements this guide entitled "Communicating with the Public." The document discusses other public affairs issues which are related to information resource issues outlined in this guide. In order to obtain a copy of this document, please contact OCEPA's Editorial Services Division at (202) 260-4359.

Future Plans for Guide

Potential users interviewed during the development of this guide indicated that regular updates would be required to keep it current and useful. Therefore, this guide will be viewed as a "living document" which will be updated and expanded to allow the document to be as useful as possible for an extended period of time. Planned updates and enhancements include:

- Update information on public access initiatives ongoing within EPA

- Include information on potential applications of new technologies as they become available.

To facilitate the updating process through identifying areas for improvement and update, a user survey, entitled "Update and Comment Form" has been developed. Any comments or suggestions should be given on the form, which is located in the Appendix D of this document, and forwarded to Brigid Rapp, Chief, Information Access Branch, Information Management Services Division (IMSD), OIRM, (202) 260-8710, PM-211D. Comments and suggestions will be reviewed for incorporation in the next edition of this guide.
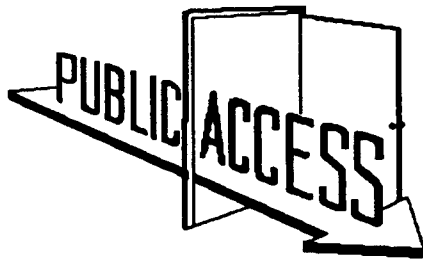
II. IDENTIFYING AND UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to assist EPA offices in:

- Identifying members of the public (i.e., audiences) interested in information maintained by the particular office

- Understanding the needs of these audiences with regard to obtaining and using EPA's information (e.g., type of information, format, delivery mechanism).

This section is intended to serve as the building block for offices developing public access programs. Prior to determining which media, access point, or distribution mechanism to use to convey a message, an office must first understand the audience that needs to be reached and its needs with regard to obtaining EPA's information. This section will provide an approach to acquiring this type of information.

Approach

To determine how best to approach identifying audiences and understanding their information needs, an office should first:

- Define its requirements and objectives for obtaining audience information

- Evaluate and select an approach for collecting relevant information.

These steps are discussed in the following text.

Objectives and Requirements

The following questions need to be answered when formulating an objective with respect to identifying and understanding audiences:

- For what specific sets or types of information does an office want to identify audiences? For example, does an office want to try to identify all potential audiences for its information (i.e., all audiences for information maintained by the Office of Water) or should only one specific topic area (e.g., lead in drinking water) be investigated? In general, the more targeted and focused the set of information, the easier and less resource intensive it will be to determine audience needs.

- What specific user needs should be investigated? Typical user needs that should be targeted include:

    - *Format* - Would the audience like to receive data in electronic, hard copy, or another format?

    - *Level of Detail* - Would the audience prefer to receive summary information, raw data, or both?

    - *Quality Assurance* - What level of quality is required in the data, and how current must it be to be useful to the audience?

    - *Time Requirements* - Does the public need to receive information within a certain time frame for it to be helpful?

    - *Language Requirements* -- What language would the audience prefer (e.g., English, Spanish)?

    - *Access/Delivery Points* - Do members of the public want to access the information in their public library, through a clearinghouse, or a hotline? Would the audience purchase the information at the Government Printing Office (GPO), the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), or another distribution mechanism?

    - *Outreach Mechanisms* - How does the public find out what information is available from EPA? Through public service announcements, news

releases, newsletters, hotlines, electronic bulletin boards, conferences, or through an association?

- *Cost* - When and how can cost recovery mechanisms be implemented? Is cost a prohibitive factor in obtaining the Agency's information?

• Should only current audiences be investigated or should potential audiences be considered as well? Current audiences are easier to investigate as some information is already known about them. Focusing solely on known audiences, however, may continue to exclude other groups who are not currently aware of EPA's information.

• Should only a specific subset of the public be targeted? For example, should the user study be focused on only the general public? Or the scientific community?

• Should only audiences in a limited geographic area (e.g., a Region) be investigated or should a national or international perspective on needs be obtained? Again, the more focused the objective, the easier it will be to collect information about the audience. However, especially in terms of a national clearinghouse, a broad perspective on the needs of its audiences may be required to make the access point truly responsive to users' needs.

Further questions will become apparent as the types of information required to enhance public access efforts are identified.

Regardless of the specific objective, the office should ensure that the objective is sufficiently defined to facilitate collection of useful information. Ambiguous or overly broad data collection objectives will result in the unnecessary expense of resources and the collection of information which may not facilitate decision making. Another important factor to consider when formulating the objective is existing organizational or resource constraints. All data collection objectives ought to be achievable within existing or projected organizational and resource constraints, or these data collection efforts will not be useful in enhancing public access efforts.

Evaluating and Selecting Potential Approaches

An office next needs to decide upon the best approach to collecting the necessary information. In this section, two collection approaches are discussed.

- *User Study* - Collects information on existing audiences or assists with identifying and learning about new audiences

- *Feedback Mechanisms* - Can be incorporated into ongoing operations to collect information on the degree of user satisfaction with existing products or services.

In this chapter, each approach is discussed in further detail along with its benefits and limitations. Additionally, offices that have conducted such a study are provided as contacts for further information.

To select a specific approach, an office should evaluate each one relative to the previously defined objective to determine if the approach will allow the appropriate information to be collected. Certain approaches may be initially eliminated based upon their inability to collect relevant information. To decide between remaining approaches, the office will need to consider which best satisfies its data collection objective while taking into account any organizational or resource constraints. For instance, certain approaches may provide a comprehensive set of information, but may be too expensive to be realistic. To facilitate this evaluation, a graphic is included at the end of this chapter which summarizes each approach and its primary benefits and limitations.

User Studies

Purpose

This section discusses the following types of user studies.

- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Request Examination

- Internal EPA Surveys

- External Surveys.

Various approaches to conducting each type of study are discussed as well as benefits and limitations of particular approaches. Also included is contact information for offices within the federal government that have utilized this approach to learn more about their audiences.

Before starting any information collection effort, EPA offices must first consider the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) regulations concerning information collection. These regulations state that federal agencies cannot collect information from more than nine sources external to the Agency without the express permission of OMB as part of an Information Collection Budget request. Related issues can be discussed with more than nine sources if a structured questionnaire or survey instrument is not utilized. To obtain OMB clearance, Standard Form 83 must be completed and submitted with a narrative statement explaining why the information needs to be collected. OMB then has 60 days to approve or deny the request. To facilitate receiving approval, the office that submitted the request should closely monitor the progress of the request through OMB. Contacts that can assist in this process are provided at the end of this chapter.

FOIA Request Examination

This section examines FOIAs as a means of gathering audience information as well as the benefits and limitations of this type of user study.

Approach

FOIAs are a primary means by which members of the public request information from EPA. In 1990, the Agency received a total of 39,254 requests, the fourth largest volume of requests among all federal agencies. Due to the increasing interest in environmental information, EPA's Executive Secretariat estimates that the number of requests will continue to grow at a rate of 20% per year. Because of the large volume of FOIAs, an examination of these requests can reveal the following:

- Types of audiences requesting an office's information

- Types (i.e, subjects or topic areas) of information in which the public is interested

- Number of requests for particular types of information.

With this information from FOIA requests, an office can develop a basic profile of its current audiences and their interests.

Each Headquarters program office and each Region has a FOIA liaison who can assist with compiling lists of appropriate FOIAs. Additionally, the Agency's Freedom of Information Officer within the Office of the Executive Secretariat maintains records of FOIAs requests and responses.

Benefits and Limitations

There are a number of benefits and limitations associated with examining FOIAs to help identify and understand audiences for a particular office's information. These are:

Benefits

- FOIA examination does not require extensive investment in data gathering as the information already exists and is available within EPA.

- Examining FOIAs can be relatively inexpensive due to the fact that much of the information has already been collected.

- FOIAs provide basic information about audiences and the types of information in which they are interested.

Limitations

- FOIAs may not present an accurate assessment of the audiences demanding the Agency's information. Instead, they may only reflect sophisticated audiences, knowledgeable about the FOIA process and with the funds to pay for any costs which are incurred in the process. (In 1990, 80% of all EPA FOIAs were from commercial requesters which does not provide a complete profile of the audiences interested in EPA's information.)

- FOIA examination may not reveal extensive information about audience needs (e.g., format, level of detail). Instead, the requests may indicate only the type of information in which the party is interested and the demand for that information as exhibited through the FOIA process.

- FOIA examination may not provide information on the topic in which an office is interested. If that information is already readily available from another source, such as a hotline or docket, then the number of FOIAs in this area may be limited.

- FOIA examination will exhibit information on current audiences only. It does not investigate needs of potential audiences.

Although FOIA examination may be fairly quick and easy to accomplish, it often only provides limited information about audiences which may not be sufficient to satisfy an office's data collection needs. Therefore, FOIA examination may best be viewed as a starting point for identifying basic information that then provides the basis for targeting a more extensive investigation. The box on the following page provides contact information for offices that can provide further assistance in this area.

CONTACTS

Staff from the Permit Compliance System (PCS) recently undertook an examination of FOIAs as a means of assessing the public access requirements for their system. The Office of Water Enforcement and Permits should be contacted for further information on this study, (202) 260-8304, 8-202-260-8304 (FTS).

Agency Freedom of Information Officer, (202) 260-4048, 8-202-260-4048 (FTS).

Internal EPA Survey

This section will discuss opportunities for surveying EPA staff to help identify and understand audiences.

Approach

Requests from the public for information enter the Agency at a variety of points. Examples of these include the following:

- Headquarters Public Information Center (PIC)

- EPA libraries

- Office of the Administrator

- Office of Communications, Education, and Public Affairs (OCEPA)

- Office of the Administrator

- Center for Environmental Research Information (CERI)

- EPA Publications and Information Center, (EPIC) Cincinnati

- Hotlines

- Clearinghouses

- Dockets

- Electronic bulletin boards

- Individual programmatic or administrative offices within Headquarters, the Regions, or the Laboratories.

Each of these points have valuable information concerning public demand for EPA's information.

Two approaches for eliciting information from EPA staff about audience needs are discussed below:

- *Interviews* - Individuals or groups of individuals can be interviewed to gather information on audiences. The interviews can be conducted: by telephone, in person, using a computer, or through the mail. The particular means used will impact the amount of time, the level of effort, the number of responders, and the quality of the information. To promote and facilitate relevant discussion in an interview, a questionnaire should be developed. This questionnaire can be in hard copy format with specific "skip" instructions provided to guide the interviewer/interviewee through the questionnaire based on responses, or the questionnaire can be administered using a computer. In the latter case, appropriate questions will be automatically retrieved based upon interviewee responses. A successful data collection effort depends upon:

    - *Questionnaire Content* - All designated issues must be addressed.

    - *Question Order* - A logical flow to the questions aids the respondent. Additionally, bias must be considered in that information raised in an earlier question may affect subsequent responses.

    - *Question Wording* - The questions must be clear and understandable. Ambiguous questions and unfamiliar terms will inhibit useful responses.

    - *Questionnaire Format* - This relates to a questionnaire that would actually be seen by the interviewee. The format should be attractive, and the design should facilitate completion by guiding the respondent to the next question and reducing the likelihood of errors.

    - *Cover Letter* - If a questionnaire is mailed, a cover letter must be sent with it explaining the survey and the incentives for the requester to reply.

    These factors influence the results from the data collection effort in two ways - response rate and validity. The clearer, more logically designed, and attractive a questionnaire is, the higher the response rate and the

quality of the data collected. Difficult questionnaires are
likely to be ignored.

- *Focus Groups* - Focus groups will bring together a variety of EPA
  staff receiving requests from the public. In a focus group, the
  staff members have a chance to share information and to make
  suggestions on appropriate means for meeting the needs of
  audiences. Focus groups differ from group interviews in that
  the participants are expected to interact and develop potential
  solutions. Group interview participants are essentially just
  required to respond to questions posed by the interviewer. If a
  focus group is chosen as the means for obtaining information,
  the following items should be considered:

  - Groups should be between eight and ten people.

  - Groups should last a maximum of two hours.

  - A facilitator with expertise in conducting focus groups and
    more generally in group dynamics will be required to
    ensure that the focus group is conducted successfully.

  - Someone besides the facilitator should be taking notes if
    the session is not being taped to ensure that all relevant
    information is recorded.

  - A flip chart or white board is helpful in structuring and
    promoting discussion.

  - A discussion guide should be prepared to provide an
    overall framework for the focus groups. This guide does
    not have to be strictly followed, instead the facilitator
    should follow the discussion within the framework
    provided by the guide.

  - Facilities where the focus groups are being held should be
    comfortable and sufficiently spacious to accommodate the
    group.

Through the use of focus groups, an office can not only gather basic
information on audiences and their needs, but can also benefit from the
suggestions on meeting these needs stimulated through group interaction.

Regardless of the approach used, these basic steps should be followed (not all of which may be present in any given effort).

- *Define universe* - Estimate the total number of members of the perceived audience.

- *Draw sample* - The size of the sample chosen to survey will be dependent upon the size of the overall universe and the desired level of statistical accuracy.

- *Hold two to three focus groups* - These groups will aid in the identification/refinement of issues for the questionnaire.

- *Draft survey questionnaire* - Follow suggestions given in the preceding text.

- *Pretest instrument* - The questionnaire should be pretested with a small sample to identify any problems.

- *Review pretest results* - Pretest results should be reviewed and used to revise the questionnaire accordingly.

- *Distribute the questionnaire* - The revised questionnaire should be fielded to the entire sample.

- *Conduct mail or phone follow-ups* - Follow-up with those who do not respond to the initial questionnaire.

- *Analyze results* - Compile and analyze results from the survey to provide the basis for developing conclusions.

Following these steps will enable the user to develop a successful data collection effort.

Benefits and Limitations

The benefits and limitations of the various approaches to conducting internal EPA surveys are:

Benefits

- Internal surveys allow an office to obtain extensive information on EPA's current audiences and their needs.

- Internal surveys do not fall under OMB information collection regulations as information does not have to be collected from outside of the Agency.

- Both interviews and focus groups can involve EPA managers and staff in the public access process. This process will facilitate sharing information across offices and may promote the identification of opportunities for coordinating public access efforts.

- Follow-up interviews conducted in person or over the phone provide the opportunity to clarify or ask additional questions to ensure that high quality, relevant information is collected.

- Interviews conducted through the mail require less staff time to conduct than those over the phone or in person.

- Focus groups provide the opportunity to clarify or follow-up responses and provide an interactive environment to exchange ideas on how to best meet the needs of EPA's audiences.

Limitations

- Internal surveys collect information primarily on current audiences. They do not gather extensive information on potential audiences as many of the interviewees may not be familiar with audiences who do not contact EPA.

- Internal surveys can be resource intensive, especially if focus groups are chosen or if extensive numbers of interviews are conducted, because EPA employees are required to facilitate or conduct all of these focus groups/interviews.

- Questionnaires that are mailed may not elicit sufficient responses to gather useful information. Additional staff time will be needed to track down individuals who did not respond to the questionnaires.

- Questionnaires that are mailed may not elicit as high quality responses as those conducted over the phone or in person because questions can be misinterpreted, and there is no opportunity for clarification.

- Individual or group interviews may not provide as high quality responses as focus groups because they do not promote group interaction and discussion during which unique, creative ideas often emerge.

- Focus groups require more expertise to facilitate than interviews.

- Scheduling focus groups or group interviews can be challenging due to the need to coordinate various participants' schedules.

Internal EPA surveys are an excellent means of gathering information on current audiences without having to obtain OMB clearance. However, various operational constraints need to be weighed against these benefits. The following box provides a contact office that can assist with determining the appropriateness of this approach.

CONTACTS

Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation, Science, Economics, and Statistics Division (202) 260-4005, 8-202-260-4005 (FTS).

External Survey

This section describes how to survey individuals outside of EPA to identify and collect audience information.

Approach

Members of the public interested in EPA's information are the best sources of information about their needs. These individuals can represent:

- Industry (i.e., regulated community)
- Government (i.e., international, federal, state, or local)
- Interest groups (e.g., trade associations, environmental groups)
- Academia (e.g., university researchers)
- General public (e.g., citizens, elementary school students).

These audiences can provide EPA with valuable insight into the types of information in which they are interested as well as the formats, levels of detail, and methods of access and distribution most suited to their needs. Additionally, an external survey can be used to assess the level of user satisfaction with an existing product or service.

Various approaches can be utilized to conduct an external survey, similar to those discussed in the Internal EPA Survey section. Two main approaches are discussed in this section:

- *Interviews* - As discussed under the Internal EPA Survey section, interviews can be conducted either with individuals or groups to obtain information. To provide structure for the interview and to ensure that the information obtained is responsive to the data collection objective, a questionnaire with targeted questions should be developed. Potential topic areas are:

    - Type of information
    - Use of information
    - Frequency with which information is demanded
    - Level of detail required to be useful
    - Format in which information needs to be obtained
    - Appropriate access points

- Appropriate distribution mechanisms
- Level of quality which is required
- Acceptable costs.

This questionnaire can be used in a telephone interview, in person, or can be mailed to members of the public. As mentioned previously, the method chosen for conducting the interview will impact the amount of time, the level of effort, the number of responders, and the quality of the information. More specifics on the questionnaire are given in the previous Internal EPA Survey section. The benefits and limitations are discussed below.

- *Focus Groups* - Focus groups can be used to bring together various members of the public to discuss the types of information in which they are interested and the characteristics necessary for that information to be useful to them. Additionally, participants could provide EPA with suggestions on how to provide access to the Agency's information. In a focus group, the members of the public can interact and formulate ideas on innovative means of satisfying their information needs. The issues listed under the focus groups section of the Internal EPA Survey section should also be considered here.

In order to implement one of these data collection approaches, the steps defined in the Internal EPA Survey section should be followed. One of the first steps in this process is identifying the members of the public which the Agency is interested in contacting. These types of audiences can fit into two categories:

- *Current EPA Audiences* - Audiences currently requesting information from the Agency. These audiences can be identified through abbreviated FOIA examinations or surveys of internal staff. They could also be identified through any statistics maintained in an office on public phone calls or mail. Additionally, an office could perform a literature search to see how and by whom their information has been used.

- *Potential EPA Audiences* - Potential audiences are those that may have a use for EPA's information, but are not currently requesting it. These individuals or groups can be identified based upon an examination of current audiences and then an identification of additional audiences who are not requesting information, but for whom uses of the information are

apparent. Additionally, discussions with EPA staff and external organizations may elicit ideas on other groups that could be well served by obtaining EPA's information, but are not currently doing so.

To a certain extent, the number of individuals contacted will be dependent upon resources, however, the office must also be certain that sufficient numbers are contacted to ensure an accurate portrayal of audience needs. The geographical location of the members of the public to be contacted should also be considered. Is information required on only a certain Region or state, or is a national perspective required? The answers to these questions will help further target whom should be contacted.

Benefits and Limitations

The following benefits and limitations can be associated with surveying external parties to obtain audience information.

Benefits

- External surveys allow an office to obtain extensive information on the needs of EPA's current and/or potential audiences as well as the best approaches for meeting these needs.

- External surveys provide an opportunity to strengthen relationships with EPA's audiences as they perceive that the Agency is interested in learning about their needs.

- External surveys also provide an opportunity to involve state and local governments in EPA public access efforts as these organizations can assist in identifying interviewees or focus group participants and in conducting data collection efforts.

- External surveys conducted in person or over the phone provide the opportunity to clarify or follow up responses with additional questions to ensure that high quality, relevant information is collected.

- External surveys conducted through the mail require less staff time than those over the phone or in person.

Limitations

- Most external surveys fall under OMB information collection regulations which, because of the clearance process, require additional preparation time.

- External surveys can be resource intensive, especially if focus groups are chosen or if extensive numbers of interviews are conducted, due to the staff required to facilitate or conduct these activities.

- If external surveys are conducted by phone, the number of individuals who can be contacted may be limited by the availability of phone numbers.

- Questionnaires that are mailed may not elicit sufficient response. Additional staff time will be needed to track down individuals who did not respond to the questionnaires.

- Questionnaires that are mailed may not elicit as high quality responses as those conducted over the phone or in person because questions can be misinterpreted, and there is no opportunity for clarification.

- Individual or group interviews may not provide as high quality responses as focus groups because they do not promote group interaction and discussion which often prompts the emergence of unique, creative ideas.

- Focus groups require more expertise to facilitate than interviews.

- Scheduling focus groups or group interviews can be challenging when coordinating various participants' schedules.

Although external surveys offer the greatest potential of all methods for identifying and understanding audiences, there are also significant operational challenges in conducting this type of survey, such as OMB clearance and resource limitations. These challenges must be weighed against the benefits obtained from the survey. Contact information for offices that have conducted external surveys is given below.

CONTACTS

In 1990, the Interstate Council on Water Policy and the U.S. Geological Survey conducted workshops with the public to determine the need for water information and to develop practical ideas for meeting these needs. The approach to completing these workshops and the results are presented in an Executive Report which can be obtained through the National Water Information Clearinghouse, 1-800-H2O-9000. Sample questionnaires are contained in Appendix A.

The Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Office of Program Management and Evaluation is contacting external parties as a component of developing an outreach strategy for TRI, (202) 260-3938, 8-202-260-3938 (FTS).

The Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation, Office of Regulatory Management and Evaluation can provide information on OMB information collection regulations, (202) 260-2706, 8-202-260-2706 (FTS).

Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation, Science, Economics, and Statistics Division (202) 260-4005, 8-202-260-4005 (FTS).

Feedback Mechanisms

Purpose

Virtually any of the user studies described in the last section can be used to obtain feedback on existing products and services. However, beyond that, there are two types of mechanisms that can be integrated into ongoing procedures with the specific aim of obtaining feedback on products or services. These mechanisms are:

- *Product Evaluation Cards* - Forms which are utilized to measure the degree of user satisfaction with an EPA product

- *Telephone Evaluations* - Short surveys conducted by hotline or other staff to assess user satisfaction with the response given.

For each type of feedback mechanism, approaches to using this mechanism are discussed as well as benefits and limitations of the approaches. In addition, organizations within the federal government that have utilized feedback mechanisms to learn more about their audiences are listed.

Product Evaluation Cards

This section describes how to utilize product evaluation cards to collect information on EPA's audiences.

Approach

Measuring user satisfaction with EPA products can give managers information on the characteristics and needs of their current audiences. Products can include any of the following:

- Publications or letters of response

- Exhibits

- Videos

- Databases or text files in electronic format (online or via diskette, magnetic tape, or CD ROM).

Attainment of this type of information can allow EPA managers to improve upon existing efforts or to create new products which are responsive to the needs of their audiences.

When developing product evaluation cards, staff members need to first define the type of information they are interested in gathering. The following list includes several questions that could promote helpful responses from audiences:

- Were you satisfied with the content of the EPA product you received? Did it contain helpful information?

- Did it lead you to alter your environmental behavior in any way?

- Was the information at the appropriate level of detail and complexity? (e.g., Did the product provide summary information when you needed raw data? Was the product too technical or too general for you?)

- Was the product easy to read and understand (for publications only)? If not, what was wrong with the product?

- Was the product easy to use? (electronic products only)? If not, please describe any difficulties that you had.

- Was the format (e.g., hard copy, CD ROM, magnetic tape) of the product useful to you? Would you prefer to receive this kind of information in another format? If so, what?

- Was the means of product delivery acceptable to you?

- Do you feel that the price of this product was appropriate for the information you received?

- In which category would you place yourself, student/teacher, interest group, industry, government, individual citizen, etc.?

Each question needs to be very focused. This will promote appropriate responses. Additionally, the number of questions on the evaluation card should be limited as large numbers will adversely affect the response rate.

Evaluation cards, which are often simply post cards, can be enclosed with each publication, diskette, or CD ROM that is sent out to a member of the public. These cards can be enclosed each time a product is distributed or just during a selected time period each year. If the product is an exhibit displayed at a conference, the evaluation cards could be handed out and returned during the conference.

Benefits and Limitations

The following benefits and limitations can be associated with product evaluation cards.

Benefits

- These cards allow an office to evaluate the success of current products in meeting audience needs.

- Evaluation cards do not require extensive effort or resources to develop or use.

- Evaluation cards provide information on audience characteristics that can be factored into future public access efforts.

Limitations

- Production evaluation cards may fall under OMB information collection requirements.

- Product evaluation cards only allow limited information to be collected on current audiences.

- There is the potential for the response rate to be low.

The benefits and limitations of utilizing product evaluation cards to collect information must be weighed against one another and against the previously established data collection objective to determine if this method is appropriate for an office's purposes. Contact information for organizations that are knowledgeable about product evaluation cards is given below.

CONTACTS

GSA's Consumer Information Center, EPA Liaison, (202) 501-1794.

Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation, Science, Economics, and Statistics Division (202) 260-4005, 8-202-260-4005 (FTS).

Telephone Evaluations

The following section discusses how to use telephone surveys to obtain feedback on products.

Approach

Telephone surveys can be used to obtain feedback on EPA public access products and services. Prior to conducting a telephone survey, a guide should be developed to ensure that appropriate information can be obtained during the interview. Similar topic areas to those suggested in the preceding Product Evaluation Card section are appropriate for this type of feedback mechanism. Additionally, the tips provided in the Internal EPA Survey section on developing and administering questionnaires should be applied here.

Telephone evaluations for hotlines can be conducted by surveying a caller to determine his/her level of satisfaction with the response received at the conclusion of a request. This can be achieved by having a hotline manager or information specialist ask a caller if he/she would be able to provide feedback by responding to questions at the end of the call.

Obtaining evaluation information over the phone allows the office to obtain an immediate response to questions and to ask follow-up questions when necessary. **OMB clearance is usually required for this type of information collection.**

Benefits and Limitations

The following benefits and limitations can be associated with telephone surveys.

Benefits

- Allow an office to evaluate the success of current products in meeting audience needs. They also provide information on audience characteristics that can be factored into future public access efforts.

- Do not require extensive amounts of effort or resources to obtain feedback.

- Allow offices to obtain immediate feedback.

Limitations

- Allow only limited information to be collected on current audiences.

- Are limited by how cooperative users are with respect to responding to the questions.

The benefits and limitations of telephone surveys must be evaluated relative to each other and to the overall data collection objective to determine if this is an appropriate means of obtaining feedback. Contact information is given below.

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CONTACTS

Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation, Science, Economics, and Statistics Division (202) 260-4005, 8-202-260-4005 (FTS).

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Identifying and Understanding Your Audience:
A Summary and Comparison

Approaches	**Considerations for Selecting a Data Gathering Approach**				
	Information Gathered	Resources Required	Audiences Targeted	Validity of Assessment	OMB Information Collection Requirements
FOIA Request Examination	Reveals only basic information	Does not require extensive data gathering or resources	Gathers information on current audiences only	May be skewed toward sophisticated audiences	Does not fall under requirements
Internal EPA Survey	Gathers extensive information on audiences and their needs	Can be resource intensive depending upon specific data collection objective	Collects data primarily on current audiences	Can be skewed toward audiences who are most vocal in their demands to EPA	Does not fall under requirements
External Survey	Gathers extensive information on audiences and their needs	Can be the most resource intensive depending upon the specific data collection objective	Can collect data on both current and potential audiences	Provides most accurate assessment as audiences are directly providing information	Subject to requirements
Feedback Mechanisms	Provide basic information on audience satisfaction with existing products	Do not require extensive resources to develop or collect information	Collect information on current audiences only	Provide accurate assessment as audiences are directly providing information	Can be subject to requirements
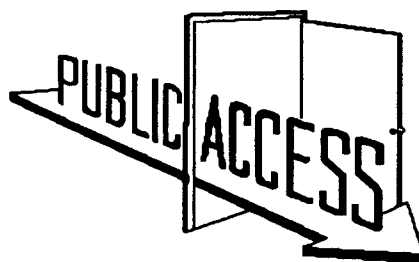
III. DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

INTRODUCTION

This section identifies several available media (i.e., formats for storing and transmitting data) that can be used to deliver information to the public. In order for the public to understand the message being transmitted, information must be presented in formats that can be easily used and understood. The type of medium in which information is transmitted may influence how the message is interpreted and its impact on the public. The availability of a variety of media will allow an office to choose a medium appropriate to the needs of the audience.

This section will help EPA offices identify and understand the characteristics, benefits, and limitations of several of the more widely used media.

- Hard copy (e.g., publications)
- Multimedia (e.g., videotapes, graphics)
- Electronic (e.g., computer disks).

In many cases, an audience will request a specific medium, in order to meet its own needs. It is important, however, to understand the benefits and limitations of each medium to ensure that an audience will not be excluded due to the selection. A summary chart at the end of this section provides the various attributes associated with the different types of media.

Additional information on media, can be found in OCEPA's publication entitled, *Spreading the Word: A Guide to OCEPA Services*. The sections entitled "Editorial Services" and "Multimedia Services" present further information on the media available for communicating with the public. Contact the Editorial Services Division in OCEPA at (202) 260-4359, 8-202-260-4359 (FTS) for information on obtaining this handbook.

Applicable Policies

All publications, multimedia products, and electronic media containing information intended for public distribution are subject to review under EPA's product notification and review process, administered by the Communications Planning Division of OCEPA. By working directly with program and other offices, OCEPA's communications planners ensure that the information contained on public oriented products is of consistently high quality and creativity and supports EPA's overall themes and goals. A reference manual, *Developing Products for the Public: A Handbook for EPA Communicators*, available through OCEPA's Communication Planning Division, further explains the review process and various steps for developing products intended for public use. Program or administrative offices should seek counsel from their communication strategists, who will contact the Communications Planning Division for complete guidance on producing communications products subject to the review process.

Another OCEPA publication entitled, *Communications Planning Guidance*, available through OCEPA's Communications Planning Division, should also be referenced for developing an internal communication plan which is required before informing the public of new policy or other major Agency issues. The communication strategist assigned to each program or administrative office should be consulted when developing such a communication plan. Besides outlining the steps to take for designing a communication plan, the guidance presents a chart which suggests audiences to notify, the actions to take, and the tools (e.g., letters, fact sheets, videos) needed to inform the public of the intended message.

In order to efficiently track the production and dissemination of environmental information, an Agency-wide numbering system has been developed. The numbering system will be managed by EPA Publications and Information Center (EPIC) in Cincinnati, and the Center's Manager will assign publications, multimedia, and electronic media numbers to the program offices for all products developed. Introduction of the new numbering system is being made through the *Facilities Printing Manual*. For information on this publication, contact the Office of Administration and Resources Management (OARM), Facilities Management and Services Division at (202) 260-2030, 8-202-260-2030 (FTS). Publication numbers may be obtained by calling EPIC at 8-513-569-7980 (FTS).

Other manuals and guidelines exist that provide additional information on the use of publications, multimedia products, and electronic media. Several of these documents are listed below.

Publications

- *Publications Management: A Guide to Processes, Standards, and Style,* available through OCEPA's Editorial Services Division at (202) 260-4359, 8-202-260-4359 (FTS)

- Standards and publication manuals produced by individual program offices. Examples include:

  - The Office of Emergency and Remedial Response (OERR)'s *OERR Publications Standards Handbook* which identifies program and Agency-wide publication policies can be obtained by calling (202) 260-2180, 8-202-260-2180 (FTS)

  - *Handbook for Preparing Office of Research and Development Reports,* produced by the Center for Environmental Research Information (CERI) at (513) 569-7391, 8-513-569-7391 (FTS)

Micrographic Products

Contact the Information Management and Services Division within OARM at (202) 260-5911, 8-202-260-5911 (FTS) for additional details on these policies and regulations.

- *NARA Regulations at 36 CFR Parts 1230 ,1232* - Establishes standards for creating, using, maintaining, securing, preserving, and disposing of audiovisual and micrographic records

- *Information Resources Management Policy Manual 2100; Chapter 10, Records Management* - Provides overall policy direction on creating and maintaining and disposing of audiovisual and micrographic records

- *EPA Records Management Manual 2160* - Contains guidance on creating, managing, storing and disposing micrographic records

- *EPA Model Regional Records Management Operating Procedures Manual* - Describes procedures on using and managing different formats of micrographic records

Electronic Media

Contact the Information Management and Services Division within OARM at (202) 260-7732, 8-202-260-7732 (FTS) for additional details on these policies and regulations.

- *Electronic Communications Privacy Act (P.L. 99-508)* - Mandate agencies to provide safeguards for access to electronically transmitted information

- *NARA Regulations at 36 CFR Part 1234* - Provides procedures for managing electronic records, selecting and maintaining electronic storage media, and meeting legal requirements for the disposition of records

- *National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 145, September 17, 1984* - Specifies agencies must meet minimum security requirements for civilian federal agencies for maintaining sensitive data on computer systems

- *EPA Information Security Manual (December 1989)* - Explains how to comply with electronic security requirements outlined in the 1987 Information Security Policy.

- *Circular 90-1 Federal Information Resources Management Regulations (FIRMR): FIRMR Bulletin B-1--Electronic Records Management Regulation* - Establishes guidelines associated with creating, maintaining, using, and disposing of electronic records

The offices listed above can be contacted for information, including how to obtain copies of each publication.

Approach

In order to make an informed decision when selecting a particular media for an audience, several issues should be considered:

- *Define the needs of the intended audience* - It is important that offices first identify the type of information the public wants, the level of detail needed on the subject, how the information will be used, if a particular medium is preferred by the audience, and

types of equipment are available to the users (i.e., audiovisual or electronic).

- *Identify the monetary resources available for medium development* - Limited funding, for example, may narrow the types of media that can be used.

- *Consider the material or equipment needed for making products available* - Some offices might need to make special arrangements for producing certain products, such as CD ROMs and video tapes.

- *Determine when the audience must receive the message or information* - Since certain types of media could take considerable time to develop and distribute, the information contained in them may quickly become outdated, requiring frequent updates.

These guidelines will help narrow the choices when selecting appropriate media for an audience.

The descriptions provided in the remainder of this chapter can help to assess each medium for its potential usefulness and value for transmitting the desired information or message. If there are questions regarding a specific medium, the offices identified as contacts can be reached for additional information or guidance.

Publications

Basic Description

Publications consist of any information printed on paper which may contain varying combinations of text, graphics, illustrations, or photographic images. Published material includes technical reports, newsletters, brochures, fact sheets, policy directives, or journals.

Issues Associated With Use

Before preparing any publication, an office should refer to EPA guidance on program-specific or Agency-wide publication standards. It is also important to consult with the office's communication strategist for advice on procedures and policies. When preparing any publication, there are several key issues to consider.

- Determine the nature and size of the audience to be reached in consultation with OCEPA.

- Determine if there will be a need to publish the information in different languages.

- Consider what type of information is needed to satisfy the audience's demands or EPA's policy or program objectives.

- Consider the level of technical depth and detail that is appropriate for the relevant audience. For example, technical material should not be included in "consumer" publications.

- Determine the appropriate mix of text and illustrations and the type of publication which will best convey the information. For example, general information intended for public use may best be presented in a small brochure using text and illustrations.

- Determine printing specifications prior to submitting documents to the EPA print shop. Allow at least three weeks for printing.

- Consider costs of document preparation, printing, and distribution.

- Consider how long the document should be available to the public and whether it will need to be reprinted.

Resolution of these issues will allow EPA offices to determine if publications are the appropriate medium for their audiences.

Offices also have the option to publish printed material as a stand-alone document, or as part of an existing periodical. The publications listed below are examples of several sources which accept Agency-wide articles.

- *Program newsletters* - Approximately 70 program newsletters are published and contain articles on program-specific events. Program newsletters are distributed to Agency staff and external organizations who have an interest in program activities. EPA also publishes *EPA InSight*, an Agency-wide internal newsletter for all employees. OCEPA's Editorial Services Division can be contacted for the name of each newsletter and editor. The editor can provide information on the newsletter's focus, and how to submit articles for publication.

- *EPA Journal* - The *Journal* is published by OCEPA bimonthly and is suitable for general audiences. The environmental themes contained in each issue vary, and the EPA *Journal* editor often asks program offices to contribute articles for the publication. OCEPA also welcomes suggestions for topics and articles to be included in the *Journal*.

For specific inquiries and additional information on other sources which accept Agency-wide articles in their publications, contact the OCEPA Editorial Services Division.

Applicable Procedures

When a document has been prepared for printing, it *must* be submitted to an EPA print shop at either Headquarters or in a Region. All offices are required to use an EPA print shop. There are several options available through the print shop:

- Documents can be printed at no charge at EPA's print shop. (Limit 60,000 pages per job.)

- The print shop can send material to the Government Printing Office (GPO) for printing and distribution. Additional details on the services offered by GPO and NTIS can be found in Chapter V of this guide, or by contacting an EPA print shop.

The EPA print shop selects which option to use based on volume and type of printing to be done. All questions concerning printing policies should be addressed to an EPA print shop. The OCEPA guidance entitled *Publication Management: A Guide to Processes, Standards, and Style* further details federal as well as EPA-specific regulations governing printing at EPA, including prohibitions on contractor printing, as well as information on the EPA recycling policy.

Benefits and Limitations

There are a number of benefits and limitations associated with utilizing publications to communicate information to the public.

Benefits

- Printed publications are automatically made available to the Federal Depository Libraries and EPA's Library through the EPA print shop.

- EPA offices and other users are already familiar with using publications to disseminate Agency information.

- Publications can reach a wide audience because the materials can be directly sent to and used by almost anyone.

- Publications do not require the use of special or expensive equipment.

- Publications can easily be scanned through to determine the location of relevant information.

Limitations

- Printed material can take up large amounts of storage space. To mitigate this limitation, the EPA Publications and Information Center (EPIC) can provide storage of printed publications.

- Integration and manipulation of data is more difficult with printed material.

- Publications are more expensive to produce or reproduce in large numbers than most electronic information.

- Updating publications may require expending considerable time and money for researching, writing new information, or printing.

Although publications are a good way to reach almost any audience and are likely to retain their popularity over time, there are many standards and guidelines to follow when preparing materials for print, as indicated in this section's introduction. The contacts listed on the following page can provide additional details on the various policies and procedures associated with publication production at EPA.

CONTACTS

Editorial Services Division, OCEPA - Publications production and inventory, fact sheets, newsletters, *EPA Journal, EPA InSight,* (202) 260-4359, 8-202-260-4359 (FTS)

Headquarters Print Shop - Document printing policies, GPO Liaison, Federal Depository Library distribution; (202) 260-2125, 8-202-260-2125 (FTS)

Headquarters Library - Federal Depository Library distribution, (202) 260-5922, 8-202-260-5922 (FTS)

EPA Publications and Information Center (EPIC), Cincinnati - Agency numbering system, fact sheets, storage of documents, (513) 569-7980, 8-513-569-7980 (FTS)

Innovative Uses

Great Lakes Pursuit
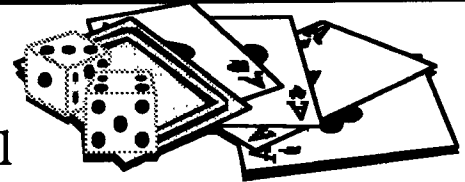
In an effort to promote environmental understanding of the Great Lakes Region, the Sea Grants Program developed an innovative type of publication, the Great Lakes Pursuit board game.

This trivia game, originating in Ohio, consists of 500 questions about the Great Lakes Basin environment. It is suitable for ages fourteen through adult and is currently primarily sold to educators. Great Lakes Pursuit is promoted through the Sea Grant Network, Center for Great Lakes, and various state agencies, workshops and newspapers.

For more information contact the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, National Sea Grant Program, in Columbus, Ohio at (614) 292-8949.

Innovative Uses

Fact Sheets

EPA
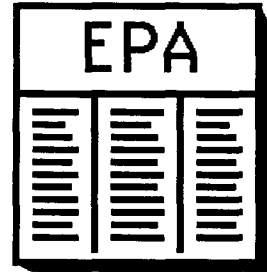
Many program and administrative offices publish fact sheets, which are short documents that present environmental information. Fact sheets convey program-specific or general information to the public. They often highlight specific events and identify the status of various programs.

Fact sheets can be obtained from any office that produces them. Also, the Headquarters Public Information Center contains a collection of fact sheets available to the public and EPA staff. Fact sheets are also distributed at exhibits and are sent out to the public to follow up on phone inquiries. They can also be used by a program office to keep in touch with other offices' as well as federal agencies' current projects and issues of interest.

For additional information on fact sheets, contact the Editorial Services Division within OCEPA at (202) 260-4359, 8-202-260-4359 (FTS), or the Public Information Center at (202) 260-7751, 8-202-260-7751 (FTS).

Multimedia Products

Basic Description

Multimedia products are materials designed to aid in learning and transmitting information or messages using both sight and sound. Materials are often in graphic forms, with minimal written text. Multimedia materials may take the form of videos, audio tapes, slides, pictures (e.g., posters, photographs, charts), filmstrips, microfilm, or microfiche.

Issues Associated With Use

Multimedia products are widely used by EPA to transmit information. However, various considerations and requirements are associated with using multimedia products. Key considerations are:

- *Audience* - The intended message may not be clearly understood unless products are developed for specific audiences with a specific purpose (e.g., a video for elementary school students about pollution prevention).

- *Equipment* - Some multimedia materials require the use of special equipment, such as a projector, in order to view and/or understand the product.

- *Facilities* - There are often facility requirements, (e.g., a meeting room) that are necessary for audiences to view a presentation.

- *Cost* - Depending on the specific product to be developed or updated, there can be significant costs and labor associated with multimedia product development, such as video production. There may also be a need to charge the public for using multimedia materials.

Although there are several key issues that must be considered with multimedia use, these products provide an alternative and often interesting and entertaining way of effectively transmitting information.

Applicable Procedures

Besides conducting the internal product notification and review process for all multimedia products, OCEPA's Multimedia Services Division will function as a liaison between program offices using contractors, (e.g., private filmmaking companies) to ensure that the product conforms with EPA's quality standards. Program offices should contact Multimedia Services for complete guidance on producing multimedia materials and using a contractor. Multimedia Services should also be contacted for advice on producing and designing public giveaway items such as bumper stickers, pins, posters, magnets or T-shirts.

Although there are a variety of multimedia products available, videos may be one of the more widely used types of multimedia. Besides informing and educating, videos can be entertaining for all types of audiences, (i.e., technical to general public) and are appropriate for any age group. One of the first steps in planning a video, like all public outreach efforts described in this section's introduction, is to identify the intended audience and define the goals of the outreach effort. Each office's communication strategist or the Multimedia Services Division should be contacted for assistance and guidance in the actual video production. *Spreading the Word: A Guide to OCEPA Services* further describes the services available to individuals planning to develop all multimedia products, including videos.

Benefits and Limitations

There are various benefits and limitations associated with using multimedia products to convey information to the public.

Benefits

- *Videos (includes video cassette tapes and reel to reel films)* - Videos can be used effectively for conveying any message, regardless of how simple or complex the subject. Whether portraying action oriented events or informational lectures, videos often generate interest, while entertaining and educating the audience.

- *Slides (also applicable to filmstrips)* - Slides can be easily used when traveling as their small size makes them convenient to store and transport. Projector type slides may also be preferred to larger 8 1/2" by 11" overhead slides because the images appear sharper, and they do not

have to be manually switched for viewing. In addition, costs for slide production are minimal.

- *Pictures (i.e., posters, photographs, charts)* - The content of a picture is often easier to remember than words. As a result, pictures are a very effective means of conveying simple ideas, such as conference themes or the main points of a program. Minimal costs are often associated with their development. OCEPA's Editorial Services Division can assist with locating photographs for use in public access projects.

- *Microfilm and microfiche* - Large quantities of information can be stored on microfilm and microfiche using limited space. Their small size makes them easier to distribute. Minimal costs are associated with microfilm/microfiche production.

- *Computer-based graphics* - Computer-based multimedia presentations create visual interest and can convey either simple or complex messages using text and illustrations, with or without a speaker or audio cassette presenting the information.

Limitations

- *Videos (includes video cassette tapes and reel to reel films)* - Considerable expenses can be incurred during video production, and the production process can be very time consuming. Several pieces of equipment are normally required for viewing, and the equipment can be cumbersome to transport. Additionally, audiences may have to travel to view the presentation. This may be overcome with multimedia teleconferencing.

- *Slides (also applicable to filmstrips)* - Even though the slides themselves are easily transportable, they require both a projector and screen to view.

- *Pictures (i.e., posters, photographs, charts)* - In order for pictures to have the intended effect, the subject matter must be carefully chosen and presented so that the

audience understands the message. Pictures are not useful for portraying complex or detailed ideas or issues.

- *Microfilm and microfiche* - The machines used for viewing and copying microfilm/microfiche can be difficult to operate, and information can be hard to locate and read. Public access to viewing machines may be limited to specific locations, such as libraries and universities.

- *Computer-based graphics* - Presentations require computer, projection equipment, or a large screen television which may be difficult to transport or assemble for viewing.

The offices referenced below can be contacted for additional guidance or information on experience with multimedia products.

CONTACTS

OCEPA Multimedia Services Division - Multimedia productions, (202) 260-2066, 8-202-260-2066 (FTS)

Environmental Response Branch, Emergency Response Division, Edison, NJ, - Video productions, (908) 321-6740, 8-908-321-6740 (FTS)

Communication Strategist, Office of Water - Slide shows, (202) 260-2285, 8-202-260-2285 (FTS)

EPA Publications and Information Center (EPIC), Cincinnati - Agency numbering system, (513) 569-7980, 8-513-569-7980 (FTS)

OIRM/IMSD Information Access Branch - Federal regulations and EPA IRM policies relating to audiovisual and micrographic records, (202) 260-5911, 8-202-260-5911 (FTS)

OIRM/IMSD Information Access Branch - Federal regulations and EPA IRM policies relating to electronic records, (202) 260-5636, 8-202-260-5636, or (202) 260-7732, 8-202-260-7732 (FTS)

Innovative Uses
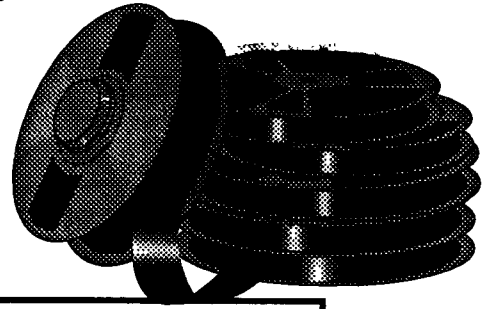
Videos

In an effort to inform the public of its research projects, the Environmental Research Laboratory in Corvallis, Oregon, produced a video for the general public on the laboratory mission and programs. The video now takes the place of tours through the lab, which were disruptive to the work taking place throughout the facility.

For additional information, contact the Environmental Research Laboratory, Office of Research and Development at (503) 757-4601, 8-503-757-4601 (FTS).

Innovative Uses
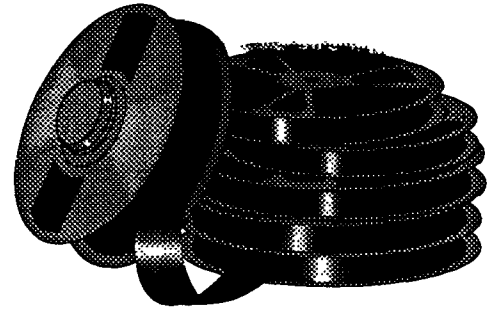
Videos

The Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics produced a video in a collective effort with industries and environmental groups.
The video, which is entitled, "In Partnership With Earth: The Future of the Environment" attempts to change companies' previous emphasis from pollution control to pollution prevention. Highlights include companies such as 3M, General Motors, General Electric, and McDonalds, which are establishing programs and initiating efforts that specifically promote pollution prevention. Public service announcements made by John Denver and Administrator William Reilly, address pollution prevention, agriculture, and community recycling. This, as well as other videos focusing on pollution prevention, are available through the Pollution Prevention Information Clearinghouse and can be loaned free of charge.

For additional information, contact the Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics at (202) 260-3557, 8-202-260-3557 (FTS).

Innovative Uses
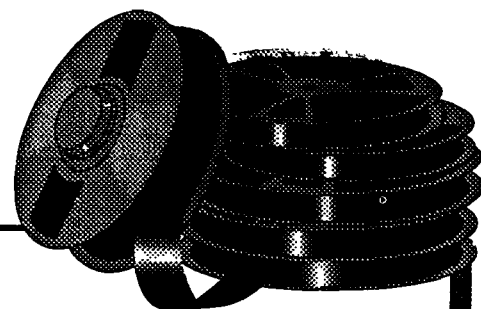
Videos

The Environmental Response Branch within the Emergency Response Division has been active in the production of several videos. One of its videos entitled, "Operation Wildfire - A Hazardous Materials Response Simulation," was produced by one of its technical contractors with connections to commercial filmmakers. The video, which was a taped training event involving three counties in the Salinas, California area, emulates a full scale hazard materials accident and the response of federal, state, and local authorities. The video documents activities in an Emergency Operations Center, and at the accident site, and follows the many decisions made to save lives and property.

As described in the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response's *Source Book: Training and Technology Transfer Resources,* the video is intended to be used as a training tool for police, fire, hazard material and emergency planning personnel, health and safety workers, and community leaders. This 16 minute video is available free of charge. The Environmental Response Branch has sent the video to fire academies for use as a training tool, where it has proven an effective means to transmit information.

Contact the Environmental Response Branch in Edison, NJ for information on this video and its other productions, at (908) 321-6740, 8-908-321-6740 (FTS).

Electronic Media

Depending on the information to be provided and the demand from the public, program offices may choose to provide information to the public in an electronic format. Electronic media consist of devices that contain information/data that are accessed through computer systems. Floppy diskettes, magnetic tapes, and optical disks (e.g., Compact Disk Read Only Memory (CD ROM)) are several means of transmitting information to the public electronically. Each of these types of electronic media is described below, with contact offices provided at the end of this chapter. For information on online systems, such as electronic bulletin boards and databases, refer to Chapter IV, Developing Access Points.

Floppy Diskettes

Basic Description

Floppy diskettes are thin, flexible disks with one or two magnetic read, write recording surfaces. Disks are available in two sizes, either 5 1/4" or 3 1/2," and are both available in double density or high density. Generally, the high density diskettes have a higher data storage capacity.

Issues Associated With Use

Information contained on diskettes can be viewed from any computer that has a compatible disk drive. Before making information available on diskettes, there may be several issues to consider.

- *Audience* - It is important to be familiar with the needs of the intended audience. There may be some audiences that do not have easy access to a personal computer or do not possess the required level of technical expertise to use a computer.

- *Level of user friendliness* - The type of software chosen for accessing and displaying the data from the diskette will have implications for the ease with which users can access information. Additionally, in order to view the data contained on a diskette, users may need to reference

documentation/user manuals on software applications that can read the disk (e.g., MS DOS) or display the information (e.g., WordPerfect).

- *Formats* - Consideration should be given to the type of computer technology available to the users. Diskettes need to be prepared, or formatted, so they can be used on specific computer systems, such as Macintosh or IBM compatible. There may also be preferences or requirements for the type of software used.

- *Cost and distribution* - Generally, there are minimal costs associated with diskette production and purchase. Variations in cost depend on the number of diskettes required to store the information, and the organization from which they will be distributed. (Refer to Chapter V for additional information on distribution mechanisms.)

Because diskettes are being used by more and more people, it is important to realize their capabilities as a valuable means of information transmittal.

Benefits and Limitations

Various benefits and limitations can be associated with delivering information to the public on diskette.

Benefits

- Information on diskettes can be accessed on a personal computer very quickly.

- Diskettes require limited storage space and are easily transportable.

- With the appropriate disk format and level of user knowledge, information contained on diskettes can be easily manipulated or analyzed.

- Diskettes are relatively inexpensive to purchase.

Limitations

- In some instances, after considerable use, diskettes can wear or become damaged, and information can be lost.

- Compared to other types of electronic media, a single diskette has limited storage capacity. Several diskettes may be required to store very large amounts of information/data.

- Not all audiences have access to computers.

- If information/data contained on a diskette is not adequately indexed, it can be difficult to use.

Although their limited storage capacity may not be suitable for large amounts of information, continued wide use of personal computers may make floppy diskettes an increasingly desirable medium in which to receive information.

MAGNETIC TAPES

Basic Description

Magnetic tape is a type of film on which data can be read or written. The tape can be wound on individual reels or inserted in cartridges or cassettes. With appropriate equipment, magnetic tapes can be used on mainframe, mini, or micro computers

Issues Associated With Use

Although magnetic tapes are primarily accessed from mainframe computers, with various adapters the tapes can also be read on mini and micro computers. Before making information available on a magnetic tape, there are several issues to consider.

- *Audience* - It is important to be familiar with the audiences that will most likely make use of magnetic tapes. The current user audiences include libraries, state and federal organizations, business/industries, and associations. A number of important audiences, however, do not have computer systems equipped to handle magnetic tapes.

- *Level of user friendliness* - The type of software chosen for accessing and displaying the data will have implications for the ease with which users can access information. Additionally, in order to view the data contained on a magnetic tape, users may need to reference documentation/user manuals on software or hardware that read the tapes, or display the information.

- *Formats* - Consideration should be given to the type of computer technology available to the user audience. Magnetic tapes may need to be prepared, or formatted, so they are compatible with specific hardware or software.

- *Cost and distribution* - Generally, there are minimal costs associated with magnetic tape production and purchase. Variations in cost depend on the number of tapes required

to store the information, and the organization from which they will be distributed. (Refer to Chapter V for additional information on distribution mechanisms.)

Although not every audience can make use of magnetic tapes, information maintained on magnetic tape can be very appropriate for certain audiences who need to access and manipulate large volumes of data.

Benefits and Limitations

Magnetic tapes offer various benefits and limitations to members of the public.

Benefits

- Magnetic tapes have a relatively high data storage capacity.

- With the appropriate equipment and level of user knowledge, information contained on magnetic tapes can be easily manipulated and analyzed.

- Development/purchase costs per tape are low.

Limitations

- Special training may be required to learn to use a computer that accesses magnetic tapes.

- Compared to other types of electronic media, such as a CD ROMs, information contained on magnetic tapes may take more time to access.

- Not everyone has access to the equipment required for reading information contained on magnetic tape.

Magnetic tapes are currently used to access data maintained on mainframe computers and are often requested by organizations to receive large volumes of data.

CD ROM

Basic Description

A CD ROM is a type of optical disk that stores information approximately equal to 300,000 pages of written text. CD ROMs contain prerecorded text or image information that can only be read, not changed.

Issues Associated With Use

CD ROMs can be accessed from any computer using an adaptable, CD ROM read-only drive. Before making information available on a CD ROM, there are several issues to consider.

- *Audience* - It is important to be familiar with the audiences that will most likely make use of CD ROMs. The current user audiencès are libraries, state organizations, business/industries, major environmental groups, and some segments of the public. There may be a number of audiences, however, that do not have access to computer systems equipped to handle CD ROMs.

- *Level of user friendliness* - The type of software chosen for accessing and displaying the data from the CD ROM will have implications for the ease with which users can access information. In order to view the data, users may need to reference documentation/user manuals on the software applications.

- *Formats* - Consideration should be given to the type of computer technology available to the user audience. A CD ROM can be made to run on one computer system (e.g., either an IBM or Macintosh), or a single disk can be made for use on several computer systems (e.g., both an IBM and Macintosh), each using special software to read or display the data. Certain software packages may also be easier for the users to operate.

- *Cost and distribution* - Generally, the first/master disk of a CD ROM order may cost approximately $1,500, while

following reproductions may run about $1.50 each. Significant costs can be incurred during the process of gathering, converting, indexing, and generally preparing data to go on the disk. Also, costs can increase depending on the type of search/retrieval software that is selected. CD ROM production costs are most reasonable when data is already in machine readable form, indexing is straightforward, and inexpensive search/retrieval software is selected. Specific costs associated with CD ROM production and dissemination should be researched. (Refer to Chapter V for additional information on distribution mechanisms.)

- *Ease of updating information* - CD ROMs are currently used for text/image, such as policies, reports, and journals, or certain databases that are not subject to frequent adjustments and changes as information can only be written once on CD ROMs. If information changes frequently, the office should consider another type of optical disk or electronic medium. Even though they are used less frequently, other types of optical disks are available. In some instances, a write once read many (WORM) disk, or an erasable optical disk may be more suited to specific information needs.

Discussion and resolution of these issues will allow an office to determine if CD ROMs are appropriate for their purposes.

Benefits and Limitations

CD ROMs offer various benefits and limitations to the public.

Benefits

- CD ROMs are capable of storing large amounts of textual, image, or other information.

- CD ROMs do not take up much physical storage space.

- With appropriate equipment, software, and level of user knowledge, information/data contained on a CD ROM can usually be very quickly searched and retrieved.

- Information contained on CD ROMs can be accessed for viewing and analysis on a personal computer.

Limitations

- Although CD ROMs are becoming more popular, they require special equipment for use, which may not be accessible to all audiences.

- Because a CD ROM does not have any writing/editing capabilities, the entire disk must be reproduced if the information contained on it becomes outdated.

Before deciding to use CD ROMs to convey information to the public, it is important to weigh the benefits and limitations associated with their use.

Floppy diskettes, magnetic tapes, and CD ROMs are several of the electronic media frequently being used by the public to access Agency information. For additional information on these forms of electronic media contact the offices listed below.

CONTACTS

Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Toxics Release Inventory - diskettes, tapes, and CD ROMs, (202) 260-7248, 8-202-260-7248 (FTS)

Office of Administration and Resources Management, National Data Processing Division, RTP, NC

- CD ROMs general, (919) 541-1057, 8-919-541-1057 (FTS)
- CD ROM pilot project, (919) 541-5373, 8-919-541-5373 (FTS)

EPA Publications and Information Center (EPIC), Cincinnati - Agency numbering system, (513) 569-7980, 8-513-569-7980 (FTS)

GPO Superintendent of Documents, (202) 783-3238

Federal Computer Products Center, (703) 487-7807

Innovative Uses

Electronic Media
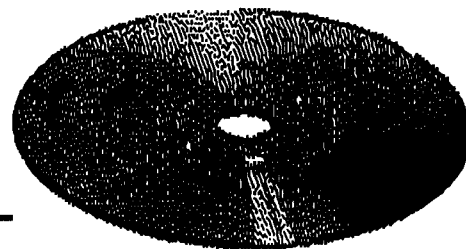
The Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics (OPPT) utilizes various electronic media, depending on the demands from the audience, to make information available.

The Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) is available to the public on floppy diskettes, magnetic tapes, and CD ROMs. OPPT uses GPO and NTIS to produce and distribute TRI in any electronic format requested. By offering a variety of products, OPPT is able to meet the information needs of its constituents, regardless of the level of computer literacy they possess. If an organization does not wish to purchase an electronic product, copies of TRI are available for loan on diskettes, tapes, and CD ROMs directly from OPPT.

OPPT also maintains a CD ROM information and reference service. The CD ROMs are used to store indexes and complete databases for the OPPT Chemical Library. Currently the Chemical Library contains the following CD databases: CHEMBANK, MEDLINE, TRI, and TOXLINE. The CD databases are continually updated, and easy for library staff and patrons to access.

For more information on OPPT's use of CD ROMS, contact (202) 260-7248, 8-202-260-7248 (FTS).

Innovative Uses

Electronic Media
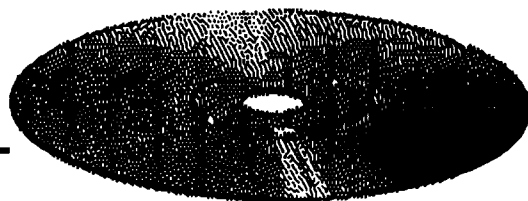
EPA's National Data Processing Division (NDPD), Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS) have completed a CD-ROM pilot project. Information previously contained on two databases and 30 paper reports has been published on a single CD, which is referred to as Air CHIEF (Clearinghouse for Inventories and Emission Factors). It contains data on various toxic substances and volatile compounds, used for estimating air emissions. The vast amount of data contained on the CD ROM can be quickly searched, and the disk itself is easy to distribute and is very affordable. Air CHIEF is currently used by industries and consultants. Nearly 600 orders have been placed for the Air CHIEF.

For additional information on the CD ROM pilot project or to order Air CHIEF, contact NDPD at (919) 541-5373, 8-919-541-5373 (FTS).

Delivering the Message:
A Summary and Comparison

Type of Media	Considerations for Selecting Media				
	Audience	Ease of Access	Storage	Cost	Ability to Use Information
Publications	Can be written for both technical and non-technical audiences	No equipment is required for use	Large storage areas may be needed for retaining voluminous amounts of printed material	Costs vary depending on materials published and the level of distribution	Difficult to extract and manipulate information
Multimedia	Can be produced for technical and non-technical audiences	Special equipment often required for viewing information	Limited space is needed for storing products	Costs vary from expensive to inexpensive, depending on the products developed	Difficult to extract and manipulate information from multimedia materials
Electronic	Used by technical and non-technical audiences with applicable computer skills	Appropriate computer equipment required for accessing electronic information	Limited storage area usually required for holding electronic media	Depending on the medium used and its development requirements, costs vary from relatively expensive to inexpensive	With the appropriate knowledge and equipment, data can be easily extracted or manipulated
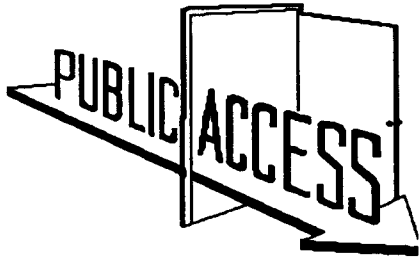
IV. DEVELOPING ACCESS POINTS

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how to build upon information gathered about audience characteristics and needs to determine the type of access point that is most appropriate for making EPA's information available to the public.[1] This section further offers issues and information to consider when developing an access point. The types of access points that are discussed include the following:

- Hotlines
- Dockets
- Electronic Bulletin Boards
- Databases
- Clearinghouses
- Public Information Centers
- Libraries.

This chapter provides an approach to evaluating the various access points as well as issues to consider for each access point. In addition, the chapter provides benefits and limitations of employing each type of access point and offers specific examples of EPA uses of the various access points. A list of existing access points within EPA is provided in the *Access EPA* publication. This resource is described in further detail in Chapter VI of this document.

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[1] Chapter II "Identifying and Understanding Your Audience" provides detailed information on approaches for gathering information on audience characteristics and needs with regard to public access to information.

Approach

Prior to selecting and developing a particular type of access point, an office should consider the following steps:

- Establish overall objectives for what the access point is intended to accomplish

- Investigate options for making information available (e.g., types of access points) and then evaluate and select an access point.

These steps are discussed in the following text.

Establishing Objectives

The following pieces of information must be identified in order to establish objectives for developing access points:

- Determine the type of information that the office is interested in communicating

- Identify the audience it is trying to reach

- Understand the needs of this audience with respect to obtaining information.

Once this basic understanding of communication needs exists, EPA managers can establish an overall objective that they wish to accomplish with regard to developing an access point. This objective, which ought to be achievable within known or projected organizational and resource constraints, will provide the basis for evaluating alternative approaches.

Identifying, Evaluating, and Selecting Potential Access Points

Descriptions are given of each of the seven types of access points along with discussions of applicable standards, policies, and procedures in this chapter. Additionally, benefits and limitations of each type of access point are discussed as well as examples of EPA uses of these points.

To select a specific access point, an office should evaluate each type relative to the previously defined objective while taking into account any organizational or resource constraints. For assistance in addressing resource constraints, the relevant Senior Budget Officer should be contacted. To

facilitate this evaluation, a graphic is included at the end of this chapter that summarizes each approach and its primary benefits and limitations.

Once an access point has been established and is operating, the responsible office should consider using one of the methods discussed in Chapter II to assess the degree of user satisfaction with the services provided. Offices should consider performing these evaluations annually.

ACCESS POINTS

Purpose

This section discusses the seven types of access points listed previously. For each type of access point, the following will be presented:

- A brief description

- Issues associated with utilizing this type of access point

- Benefits and limitations

- Innovative uses within Headquarters, the Regions, or the Laboratories

- Individuals to contact for additional information.

A graphic summarizing the access points is located at the end of this chapter.

Although there are no specific standards, policies, or procedures for most access points, all must conform to the Agency's standards, policies, and procedures in relevant areas. Examples of these include the following:

- EPA's Information Security Policies
- EPA's Publications and Printing Policies.

Mandatory policies and procedures for individual access points are given within the appropriate section.

Hotlines

This section will discuss the use of hotlines to make information available to the public.

Description

Hotlines are points of contacts for parties external to EPA to ask technical or general questions. EPA hotlines have been established to meet the demand for verbal responses to queries. Additionally, hotlines are often utilized as a means of accessing clearinghouse information. Currently within EPA most of the hotlines specialize in regulatory or risk-related issues and are utilized by state and local governments, industry, special interest groups, and the general public. Hotlines depend upon program personnel to formulate responses. Many hotlines use distribution mechanisms, such as NTIS, GPO, and EPIC to assist with the dissemination of documents.

Additionally, some hotlines are experimenting with a feature that allows for automated distribution of documents. When a caller reaches a hotline, an automated attendant feature allows the caller to choose to speak directly to an operator or to move to a document ordering menu through pressing the appropriate number. The document menu, through use of audio text technology, asks a caller a series of questions or provides a list of available documents. The caller can then choose a document based upon his/her interest. The document can be automatically faxed to a telephone number entered by the caller or mailed to an address that the caller registers at the appropriate prompt.

Issues Associated with Use

The following issues should be considered when evaluating the potential usefulness of a hotline and when developing plans for establishing a hotline.

- *Accessibility* - The EPA office needs to consider which audiences they are trying to reach and audiences' needs with regard to accessing information. Additionally to further ensure access, EPA needs to attempt to project call

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volume to make certain that sufficient lines are available for callers to get through.

- *Special Audience Needs* - The office should consider if the hotline needs a foreign language capability. Would having someone available who is fluent in Spanish significantly increase the hotline's ability to inform the public? Should the hotline have a Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) capability?

- *Information Collection* - How are the responses given out by the hotline operators formulated? What procedures should be established to ensure that the hotline has the latest information in the particular topic area?

- *Information Quality* - What level of quality is going to be required by the audiences demanding information from the hotline? How is the necessary level of quality going to be ensured with verbal responses? Various approaches to ensuring quality are currently used, including developing canned responses and monitoring selected conversations.

- *Information Searching* - When hotline operators are responding to calls, what types of information will they need at their immediate disposal? How will they search through this information - in an automated or manual fashion?

- *Services* - The types and extent of services that the hotline is going to offer must be clearly defined and then the resources must be provided to support these services. For example, is the hotline going to answer questions in a certain area or is it intended to serve as a referral point for an office? Even if the hotline intends to answer calls, a referral list should be developed as many calls will not be relevant to the hotline. Another example would be whether or not the hotline is going to distribute publications or is it going to use another distribution mechanism? Does the hotline receive sufficient requests for documents that an automated distribution capability is appropriate?

- *Staffing* - Hotline operators need to possess not only a knowledge of the particular issue area for the hotline, but the staff members must also possess appropriate

interpersonal skills to assist callers in defining their queries. An office needs to consider what methods it will use to recruit, train, and retain appropriate individuals.

- *After Hours Calls* - The hotline should consider having a mechanism in place (e.g., an answering machine) to take after hours calls, especially a national hotline which will be receiving calls from different time zones.

- *Cost* - Cost must be considered not only from the viewpoint of the cost of the hotline to EPA, but also with regard to deciding if and how to charge members of the public for the phone call and any corresponding information which is mailed to the member of the public. Is the hotline going to be toll-free or toll? This can also have implications for the volume of calls received as toll-free access tends to generate more interest.

- *Publicity* - For a hotline to be utilized, the public must be aware of it. Therefore, EPA needs to consider means of publicizing the hotline and its functions and services. Some potential outreach mechanisms are presented in Chapter VI.

Resolution of these issues will enable EPA managers to decide if a hotline is appropriate and, if so, to begin developing the hotline.

Benefits and Limitations

There are a number of benefits and limitations associated with utilizing hotlines to make information available to the public. These are described below:

Benefits

- Hotlines can be accessed via a telephone, which does not usually restrict access or exclude any audiences.

- Hotlines allow for immediate access to information and allow for requesters who do not have clearly defined needs to receive assistance.

- Hotlines offer a "personalized" touch and promote a relationship between EPA and members of the public.

- Hotlines allow EPA to receive immediate feedback on the quality of its response to the public.

- Hotlines that employ automated distribution features allow callers to receive quick access to documents and free hotline staff to respond to callers who require more assistance.

Limitations

- Hotlines must be adequately staffed to ensure an adequate level of service. Therefore, hotlines can be resource-intensive.

- Hotlines face challenges in finding and retaining staff that are qualified in the technical area of expertise and that have appropriate interpersonal skills.

- Hotlines that are not adequately staffed or that do not have sufficient phone lines (i.e., the user is on hold for lengthy periods of time or cannot get through at all) can annoy users and create a negative image of the Agency's public access efforts.

- Hotlines can have difficulty identifying and obtaining current, appropriate information to give out to users.

- It is more difficult to ensure quality and consistency in responses with a hotline than other types of access points.

Hotlines can provide a level of individual attention that other access points cannot. However, this feature must be balanced against resource requirements and other limitations. Examples of how EPA Headquarters and Regional offices have used hotlines to provide access to information are given on the following page. Additionally, offices that can be contacted for more information on developing and operating hotlines are given on the next page.

CONTACTS

Region 5's, Office of Public Affairs, (312) 886-2072, 8-312-886-2072 (FTS)

RCRA/Superfund Hotline, (202) 260-4646, 8-202-260-4646 (FTS)

Innovative Uses
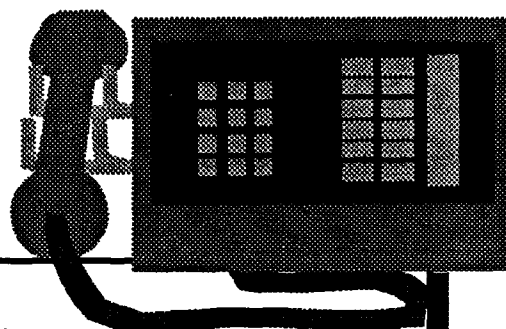
Hotlines

The Air Risk Information Support Center hotline was established in response to state and local agency demand for information in the areas of health, risk, and exposure assessment for toxic air pollutants. This hotline provides three levels of service to callers:

- *Quick Response* - providing an initial quick response based upon available health and exposure data and the expertise of EPA.

- *Detailed Technical Assistance* - requesting through the hotline the detailed, technical assistance of an EPA staff member. This could include assistance in understanding risk assessment methodologies or review and interpretation of toxicological literature.

- *General Technical Guidance* - addressing health, exposure, and risk assessment issues that have broad national interest.

Currently, no fees are charged for these services.

For more information contact the Air Risk Information Support Center, at (919) 541-0888, 8-919-549-0888 (FTS).

Innovative Uses
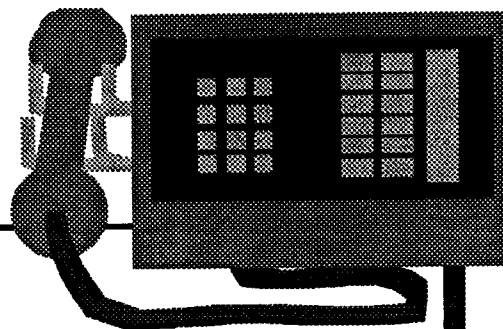
Hotlines

Several EPA Regions have established hotlines within their Public Affairs Offices as central points-of-contact for Regional information. For example, Region 5 has a toll-free hotline which performs three main functions:

- Answers many questions directly (e.g., radon, ozone)

- Distributes publications

- Refers callers to appropriate offices within the Region, other parts of EPA, or other agencies.

This service is advertised in news releases, and the number is placed in every Regional publication and phone book.

Region 5 has found consistent staffing to be the biggest challenge in operating a hotline. It currently utilizes hotline jobs as the entry-level position into the Public Affairs office to ensure qualified individuals.

Region 10 also has a toll-free hotline which performs many services similar to Region 5's. This service is advertised through publications and fact sheets.

For more information on the Region 5 hotline, contact the Office of Public Affairs at (312) 353-2072, 8-312-353-2072. For the Region 10 hotline, call Office of External Affairs at (206) 442-1107, 8-206-442-1107.

Dockets

This section will discuss the use of dockets to make information available to the public.

Description

Dockets are often used to provide public access to documentation supporting rulemaking. In addition, dockets often serve as a repository for program directives. The dockets rely upon EPA program personnel to compile and deliver the information to the docket. Docket information is accessed primarily by walk-in visitors although some dockets accept mail and phone requests for information. Users, currently including lawyers, interest groups, and EPA staff, usually photocopy the information that they require, but for major studies they are referred to EPA's Publications and Information Clearinghouse in Cincinnati or NTIS.

Issues Associated with Use

The following issues should be considered when evaluating the potential usefulness of a docket and when establishing plans for developing a docket. EPA's Docket Policy and Guidance should also be consulted for information. This policy and guidance is available from OIRM's Information Management and Services Division.

- *Accessibility* - The EPA office needs to consider the audience they are trying to reach as currently the primary means of accessing many dockets is in person. This greatly restricts access.

- *Information Collection* - How is the information maintained in the docket going to be collected? Should procedures be established to ensure that the docket receives copies of the public comments, directives, etc. related to the particular law?

- *Information Quality* - What level of quality is going to be required by the audiences requesting information from the docket?

- *Information Searching* - How will users locate information within the docket? Will there be an automated or a paper-based index?

- *Information Security* - Since members of the public will be directly accessing the information, how can EPA make certain that documents are not taken or mutilated?

- *Services* - The types and extent of services that the docket is going to offer must be clearly defined and then the resources must be provided to support these services. For example, will there be docket staff available to assist users? If so, what types of services will they offer?

- *Staffing* - Docket staff members need to possess not only a knowledge of the particular law, but the staff members must also possess appropriate interpersonal skills to assist users in locating information.

- *Cost* - Cost must be considered not only from the viewpoint of the cost of the docket to EPA, but also with regard to deciding if and how to charge members of the public for copies and if there needs to be a limit on the number of copies which can be made. Dockets must conform to the June 1988 interim fee schedule policy which was approved by the Office of General Counsel and the Office of the Comptroller, Financial Management Division. This policy establishes the following fees:

  - If 267 pages or less are copied, there is no charge

  - If more than 267 pages are copied, an administrative fee of $25 plus $.015 for each page starting with page 268.

  Photocopying charges are to be paid by a personal or business check or by money order made out to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

- *Publicity* - For a docket to be utilized, the public must be aware of it. Therefore, EPA needs to consider means of publicizing the docket and its functions and services. Suggested outreach approaches are given in Chapter VI.

Discussion and resolution of these issues will enable EPA managers to decide if a docket is an appropriate means of making information available to the public.

Benefits and Limitations

There are a number of benefits and limitations of utilizing dockets to make information available to the public. These are described below:

Benefits

- Dockets allow users to search through information, so they can locate exactly what they need.

- As users are usually searching through information themselves, dockets do not require as many EPA staff. Therefore, they are less resource intensive than other access points.

- Users are able to copy free of charge up to 267 pages which minimizes the expense to the user.

Limitations

- Many dockets can only be accessed on a walk-in basis, greatly reducing the ability to obtain the information.

- Dockets can face challenges in finding and retaining staff that are qualified in the technical area of expertise and that have appropriate interpersonal skills.

- Dockets can have difficulty identifying and obtaining current, appropriate information to give out to users.

- The potential for lost or destroyed information from a docket is real since the public is usually directly accessing paper information.

Dockets can provide access to regulatory or rulemaking information fairly inexpensively for EPA. Examples of how EPA Headquarters and Regional offices have used dockets to provide access to information are given on subsequent pages. Additionally, an office that can be contacted for more information on developing and operating dockets is given below.

CONTACT

Office of Information Resources Management, Information Management and Services Division, (202) 260-5914, 8-202-260-5914 (FTS)

Innovative Uses

Dockets
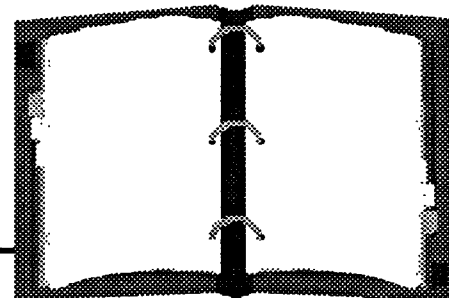
The SUPERFUND Docket provides the public access to SUPERFUND decision making documents. The docket is a repository for supporting documents to proposed and final regulations and for receipt and storage of public comments. In 1989, the SUPERFUND docket was expanded to provide a repository for a variety of SUPERFUND-related information and is now called the SUPERFUND Docket and Information Center. Access to the docket is obtained primarily through the telephone with some written and walk-in requests. The primary audiences for this docket's information are:

- EPA staff
- Federal agencies
- Law/consulting firms
- Environmental organizations
- States
- General public.

In addition to the Headquarters docket, each Region has a SUPERFUND National Priorities List (NPL) Docket.

For more information contact the SUPERFUND Docket and Information Center, at (202) 260-8864, 8-202-260-8864 (FTS).

Electronic Bulletin Boards

This section will discuss the use of electronic bulletin boards in making information available to the public.

Description

Electronic bulletin boards, which are accessed by computers equipped with a modem and appropriate communications software, are established to satisfy demands for electronic access to information on a particular subject. These bulletin boards generally promote information sharing among users by providing lists of other users, lists of expert contacts relevant to the subject area, and a means for leaving messages. Some bulletin boards rely upon voluntary input of information by the users who currently include mainly EPA staff, contractors, state and local governments, and some private citizens. Other bulletin boards are established to provide audiences with convenient access to information that is accurate and current. Bulletin boards often utilize other distribution mechanisms (e.g., GPO, NTIS) to disseminate publications; attempts are being made to establish online ordering capabilities with some of these mechanisms.

Issues Associated with Use

The following issues should be considered when evaluating the potential usefulness of an electronic bulletin board and when establishing plans for developing the bulletin board.

- *Accessibility* - The EPA office needs to consider the audience it is trying to reach because accessing an electronic bulletin board requires a computer with a modem, appropriate communications software, and the skills to utilize these tools. This can restrict access for certain audiences or require EPA to provide significant technical support. Additionally, the office must consider providing documentation for bulletin board access in clear, understandable language. An office should also consider whether a new bulletin board is needed or if an

existing bulletin board could be used to provide access to the information.

- *Information Collection and Quality* - How is the information maintained in the electronic bulletin board going to be collected? If users add information to the bulletin board, what types of quality assurance procedures need to be established?

- *Software* - EPA has an Agency-wide policy on electronic bulletin boards. This policy, a copy of which is provided in Appendix A, specifies a standard Agency software for bulletin boards. This policy is intended to promote effective Agency-wide technical support and provide guidance on systems recommended for optimal performance within the EPA telecommunications environment.

- *Information Searching and Use* - How will information within the bulletin board need to be structured to facilitate users locating the proper information? What type of user interface is needed to facilitate use? What analytical capabilities should be provided? How should the information be displayed?

- *Information Security* - What types of security are necessary on the bulletin board to prevent information from being altered, etc.?

- *Services* - The types and extent of services that the electronic bulletin board is going to offer must be clearly defined, and then the resources must be provided to support these services. For example, an electronic bulletin board may want to consider providing or identifying support for assisting users with questions on the content of the bulletin board as well as user support for operational questions.

- *Cost* - Cost must be considered not only from the viewpoint of the cost of the bulletin board to EPA, but also with regard to deciding if and how to charge members of the public for access. For instance, should the system be accessed via a toll-free or toll line?

- *Publicity* - EPA needs to consider various means of publicizing the electronic bulletin board and its functions and services to promote usage. Chapter VI provides suggestions in this area.

Discussion and resolution of these issues will enable EPA managers to decide whether an electronic bulletin board is an appropriate means of making information available to the public.

Benefits and Limitations

There are a number of benefits and limitations associated with using electronic bulletin boards to make information available to the public. Some are described below:

Benefits

- Electronic bulletin boards provide virtually immediate access to data and information.

- Knowledgeable users can download data and then manipulate or use it in their own analyses.

- Electronic bulletin boards promote information sharing among users.

- Electronic bulletin boards are not as staff-intensive as other access points except in the development and start-up phase.

- The accuracy and currency of information made available through electronic bulletin boards can be maintained through central and relatively easy update procedures.

Limitations

- Computers with modems and the appropriate software are required to access electronic bulletin boards. This will restrict usage to those with access to this type of equipment.

- Electronic bulletin boards can pose data quality problems if the data entered by users is not adequately screened.

- Electronic bulletin boards have the potential to fail unless they are sufficiently promoted to ensure there are users to interact online.

- Electronic bulletin board operators face the challenge of notifying users, who may have downloaded information, that the information has been updated or revised.

Electronic bulletin boards can provide quick access to certain types of Agency information for users who have access to computers, modems, and appropriate software. Examples of how EPA Headquarters and Regional offices have used electronic bulletin boards to provide access to information are given on subsequent pages. Additionally, offices that can be contacted for more information on developing and operating electronic bulletin boards are given below.
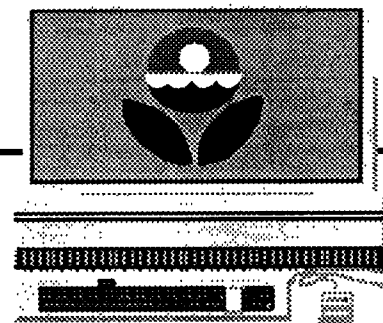

CONTACTS

Office of Administration and Resources Management, RTP, National Data Processing Division, Telecommunications Branch, (919) 541-0849, 8-919-541-0849 (FTS)

Office of Research and Development, Office of Environmental Engineering and Technology Demonstration, (202) 260-2600, 8-202-260-2600 (FTS)

Innovative Uses

Electronic Bulletin Boards

The Pollution Prevention Information Clearinghouse (PPIC) was established to promote pollution prevention through efficient information transfer. The clearinghouse contains technical, policy, programmatic, legislative, and financial information to aid in reducing or eliminating discharges and emissions through source reduction and environmentally sound recycling. The primary mechanism for accessing PPIC information is an electronic bulletin board, the Pollution Information Exchange System (PIES). PIES was designed to encourage interaction and information exchange between technical assistance professionals. The primary audiences for this bulletin board are:

- Industry
- International, federal, state, and local governments
- Academia
- Interest groups
- International organizations.

A sister program to PIES, the International Cleaner Production Information Computer System (ICPIC) was mandated by UNEP in 1989. The ICPIC is intended to transfer technical, policy, programmatic, legislative, and financial expertise on cleaner production internationally.

For more information, contact the Office of Research and Development, Office of Environmental Engineering and Technology Demonstration, (202) 260-2600, 8-202-260-2600 (FTS).

Innovative Uses

Electronic Bulletin Boards
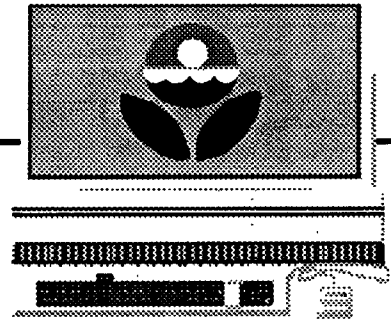
The Office of Research and
Development (ORD) operates an
electronic bulletin board to facilitate
exchange of technical information and ORD products. The
bulletin board, which is sponsored by ORD's Center for
Environmental Research Information, contains the following
information on ORD products:

- Title
- Publication number
- Abstract
- Author
- Performing organization
- Availability of the product.

Additionally, the bulletin board offers an electronic message
system, brief bulletins discussing ORD products and
activities, and online databases which can be searched to
identify relevant publications. Weekly updates are made.
The bulletin board is available to all EPA employees, other
federal agencies, states, universities, industry, and the public.

For more information, contact the Office of Research and
Development, Center for Environmental Research Information,
(513) 569-7391, 8-513-569-7391 (FTS).

Databases

This section will discuss utilizing databases to make information available to the public.

Description

Electronic databases are automated collections of data. Currently, many of EPA's databases are mainframe databases which have been developed to fulfill legislative requirements and to support the Agency's mission to protect the environment. These systems are used primarily by EPA officials and EPA's data sharing partners, such as state environmental agencies, contractors, and grantees. Currently, direct online access is not provided to many EPA systems due to security and confidentiality requirements. However, NDPD has been developing technical solutions to these issues and should be contacted for assistance. EPA also provides database information to the general public through a variety of other means (e.g., clearinghouses, hotlines, commercial and other government database vendors, such as NTIS or NLM).

Recently, many EPA offices have been experimenting with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) applications to display data from a system geographically in a manner that facilitates understanding and analysis. Although these applications are not yet used by EPA's more non-technical audiences, there are ideas for moving in this direction.

Issues Associated with Use

The following issues should be considered when evaluating the potential usefulness of a database and when establishing plans for developing the database.

- *Accessibility* - EPA needs to consider the audience they are trying to reach as accessing a database requires a computer, a modem, and compatible software. This can restrict access for certain audiences. The office should also consider what types of help features or instructions are necessary to facilitate access and usage. Additionally, the

office needs to determine if the system is going to be accessed directly on EPA's mainframe or through a third party, such as NLM or NTIS.[2]

- *Information Collection* - How are the data maintained in the database going to be collected? What procedures exist (or need to be established) to ensure that appropriate information is captured and entered into the system?

- *Data Quality* - What level of data quality is going to be required by the audiences using the database's information? What procedures are in place or are necessary to ensure that this level of quality is achieved? If errors are found, how will users report the errors and how will they be corrected?

- *Information Searching and Use* - What user interface and query capabilities will be required to facilitate users locating the proper information? What analytical capabilities should be provided? How should the information be displayed?

- *Information Security* - What types of security are necessary in the database to prevent information from being altered or to prevent unauthorized access to other data or databases?

- *Services* - The types and extent of services that the database is going to offer must be clearly defined and then the resources must be provided to support these services. For example, EPA may want to consider providing or identifying support for assisting users with questions on the data content as well as user support for technical, operational questions.

- *Staffing* - Databases will require sufficient staff support to assist users with hardware, software, and telecommunications problems, as well as to develop and operate the system.

- *Cost* - Cost must be considered not only from the viewpoint of the cost of developing and maintaining the system to EPA, but also with regard to deciding if and how

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[2] Additional information on NTIS online access services is given in Chapter V on distribution mechanisms.

to charge members of the public for access. Will a toll or toll-free number be available to access the system? Should the user be charged for CPU time?

- *Publicity* - EPA needs to consider means of publicizing the database and its functions and services to promote usage. Chapter VI provides additional information on this area.

After considering these and any other identified issues, EPA managers should be in a position to decide if a database is appropriate for meeting the needs of the particular audience.

Benefits and Limitations

There are a number of benefits and limitations of utilizing databases to make information available to the public. These are described below:

Benefits

- Databases provide virtually immediate access to data and information.

- Knowledgeable users can download data and then manipulate or use it in their own analyses.

Limitations

- Computers with modems and appropriate communications software are required to access databases. This will restrict usage to those with access to this type of equipment.

- Compatible software (e.g., database management or spreadsheet) is required to manipulate data electronically. This will restrict usage to those with access to appropriate software.

- Database operators face the challenge of notifying users, who may have downloaded information, that the information has been updated or revised.

Databases can provide quick access to certain types of Agency information for users who have access to computers, modems, and compatible software.

Further information on public access to databases is given in a paper by Jerry Slaymaker, Deputy Director, National Data Processing Division, which is provided in Appendix A. Additionally, examples of how EPA Headquarters and Regional offices have used databases to provide access to information are given on the following page. Offices that can be contacted for information on utilizing databases to provide public access are given below.

CONTACTS

Office of Administration and Resources Management, RTP, National Data Processing Division, (919) 541-0613, 8-919-541-0613 (FTS)

The Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Office of Program Management and Evaluation, Toxics Release Inventory, (202) 260-3938, 8-202-260-3938 (FTS)

Office of General Counsel, (202) 260-8040, 8-202-260-8040 (FTS) or Regional Counsels for assistance with confidentiality and liability issues

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Innovative Uses

Databases
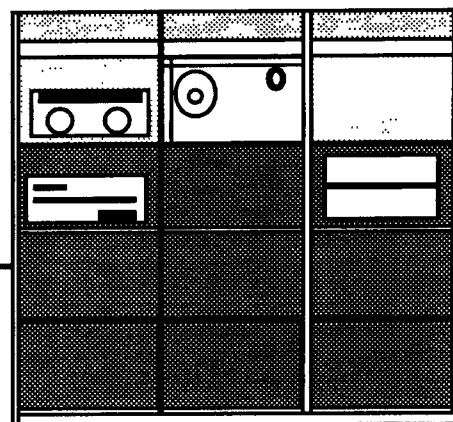
The Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) was mandated in the 1986 SUPERFUND Amendments and Reauthorization Act. This Act requires EPA to make information on the presence of hazardous chemicals and release of these chemicals in the environment available to the public. TRI information is made available electronically to the public through the National Library of Medicine's TOXNET System. Additionally, TRI data are available through the following means:

- Mail, phone, and walk-ins to the Title III Reporting Center located in Washington, D.C.

- Magnetic tape of database which is sold by GPO and NTIS

- Hotline

- Various publications

- Microfilm, CD ROMs, and diskettes of data subsets which are distributed in public libraries.

TRI information is requested by a diverse group of users, including government organizations, the chemical industry, and private citizens. TRI information is promoted through environmental publications, press releases, conferences, meetings, and trade associations.

For more information on TRI, contact the Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, (202) 260-3938, 8-202-260-3938 (FTS).

Innovative Uses

Databases
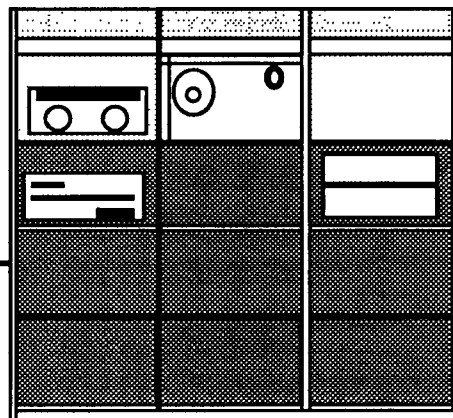
EPA's Region 4 receives a substantial number of requests for data from EPA's national systems (e.g., the Facility Index Data System). These requests are currently satisfied by printing out a report from the computer. As this is very resource intensive, Region 4 has developed a tool which allows a standard set of data to be downloaded from the national system onto a 3 1/2" diskette. The user then places this diskette into his/her computer disk drive and types "go." A menu appears which allows the user to choose from one of a variety of standard reports.

Region 4 plans to add latitude and longitude values to this data set so that the user would be able to perform searches and structure reports by location. Once these values are added, a user could then extract relevant data and produce a hard copy report at such a scale that it could be laid over a U.S.G.S. quad map to perform further analysis.

Requests for this type of information are currently received from mortgage companies, financial institutions, banks, engineering firms, and the press. Initial plans are to make these diskettes available at as low a price as possible.

For more information on this project, contact Region 4, Information Management Branch at (404) 347-2316, 8-404-347-2316 (FTS).

Innovative Uses
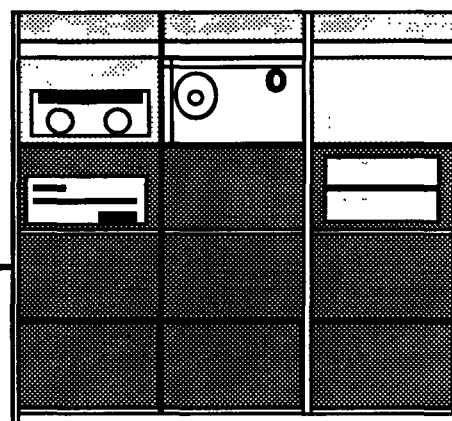
Databases

The Online Library System (OLS) references the information resources maintained in the EPA library network. OLS consists of several related databases that contain bibliographic citations from books and other federal agency's technical reports, conference proceedings, indices, audiovisual materials, maps, journals, and a variety of other documents. The information in OLS is obtained from EPA program offices, Regional offices, and NTIS. The primary users of OLS are:

- EPA staff
- Consultants
- General public
- States.

OLS is available at any EPA library.

In addition, EPA is piloting a program for the public to directly access OLS via the mainframe. The member of the public dials into the EPA mainframe, types two commands, and then is connected to OLS. Once access has been established, the user can select, from a menu, the database (e.g., Clean Lakes, Hazardous Waste) within OLS that he/she is interested in accessing.

For more information, contact the Office of Information Resources Management, Information Access Branch, (513) 569-7183, 8-513-569-7183 (FTS).

Clearinghouses

This section will discuss the use of clearinghouses to make information available to the public.

Description

Clearinghouses are consolidated reference sources established to provide information on specific subjects to members of the public. Information is usually voluntarily given to clearinghouses by program office staff. Clearinghouses provide requesters with documents or abstracts, as well referrals to other expert contacts, when appropriate. Currently, clearinghouses are primarily used by Regions, state and local governments, contractors, and industry. Access to clearinghouses occurs through a variety of means:

- Primarily by phone
- Limited use of mail
- Limited electronic access (e.g., electronic bulletin board).

Clearinghouses often combine various other access points, such as hotlines and electronic bulletin boards, into their clearinghouse operations.

Additionally, many clearinghouses use distribution mechanisms, such as NTIS, GPO, CERI, and EPIC to assist with the dissemination of documents and other information. These distribution mechanisms often fulfill many functions similar to a clearinghouse, but they are not focused on a specific subject of information. Instead, they cover a variety of topic areas. Full descriptions of the distribution mechanisms are given in Chapter V.

Issues Associated with Use

The following issues should be considered when evaluating the potential usefulness of a clearinghouse and when developing plans for establishing the clearinghouse.

- *Accessibility* - The EPA office needs to consider which audiences it is trying to reach and these audiences' needs with regard to accessing information. For example, if the majority of the audience is the general public, a

clearinghouse should not just have electronic access. Instead, telephone, mail, and fax alternatives need to be considered.

- *Information Collection* - How is the information maintained in the clearinghouse going to be collected? What procedures need to be established to ensure that the clearinghouse has the latest publications, videos, etc. in the particular topic area?

- *Information Quality* - What level of quality is going to be required by the audiences demanding information from the clearinghouse? What procedures need to be established to ensure that this level of quality is attained in each document, data set, etc. that will be made available to the public?

- *Services* - The types and extent of services that the clearinghouse is going to offer must be clearly defined and then the resources must be provided to support these services. For example, is the clearinghouse going to distribute publications or is it going to use another distribution mechanism? Is the clearinghouse going to directly answer questions or refer callers to "experts" within the Agency?

- *Staffing* - Clearinghouse staff members need to possess not only a knowledge of the particular issue area for the clearinghouse, but the staff members must also possess appropriate interpersonal skills to assist callers or walk-in visitors. EPA offices should consider how feasible it will be to recruit, train, and retain staff for a clearinghouse.

- *Cost* - Cost must be considered not only from the viewpoint of the cost of the clearinghouse to EPA, but also with regard to deciding if and how to charge members of the public for information obtained from the clearinghouse.

- *Publicity* - For the clearinghouse to be utilized, the public must be aware of it. Therefore, EPA needs to consider means of publicizing the clearinghouse and its functions

and services. Publicity alternatives are discussed in Chapter VI.

If these issues are considered initially, EPA offices can promote the development of a clearinghouse that is truly responsive to user needs.

Benefits and Limitations

There are a number of benefits and limitations of utilizing clearinghouses to make information available to the public. These are described below:

Benefits

- Clearinghouses usually offer several means of access (e.g., telephone, mail, electronic, and walk-in), so they do not exclude users based on access capabilities.

- Clearinghouses are often equipped to disseminate information in a variety of media which meets the needs of diverse users.

- Clearinghouses with hotlines or electronic access allow for immediate access to information and allow requesters who do not have clearly defined needs to receive assistance.

Limitations

- Clearinghouses can be labor and, therefore, resource intensive depending upon the level of services that is offered.

- Clearinghouses with hotlines and walk-in services have additional challenges in finding and retaining staff that are qualified in the technical area of expertise and that have appropriate interpersonal skills.

- Clearinghouses can have difficulty identifying and obtaining current, appropriate information to give out to users.

Clearinghouses clearly have real benefits in terms of providing access to information. However, these benefits must be weighed against potential operational challenges. Examples of how EPA Headquarters and Regional

offices have used clearinghouses to provide access to information are given on the following page. Offices that can be contacted for further information on developing and operating clearinghouses are given below. Additionally, the EPA Headquarters Library maintains a file which provides information on developing clearinghouses.

CONTACTS

Office of Information Resources Management, Information Management and Services Division, INFOTERRA, (202) 260-5914, 8-202-260-5914 (FTS)

Office of Atmospheric and Indoor Air Programs, Indoor Air Clearinghouse, (202) 260-8470, 8-202-260-8470 (FTS)

EPA Headquarters Library, (202) 260-5922, 8-202-260-5922 (FTS)

Innovative Uses

Clearinghouses
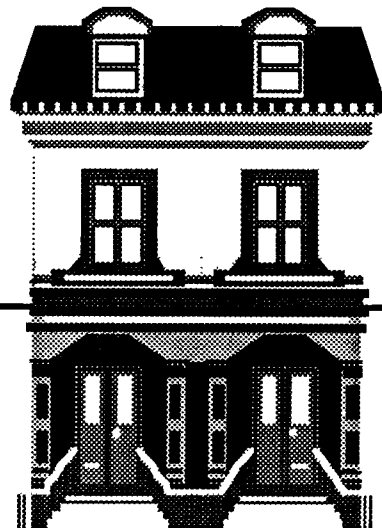
The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) identified a need to promote information sharing amongst environmental experts and interested parties worldwide. To fulfill this need, UNEP established INFOTERRA to serve as an international environmental research and referral system. Today, this network encompasses 137 participating countries, each of whom is a focal point for information exchange. The EPA component of INFOTERRA serves as a clearinghouse for all U.S. international environmental requests. Through responding to telephone and written inquiries, INFOTERRA serves the needs of the following audiences:

- Governments

- Businesses

- Policymakers

- Academia

- General public.

For more information on INFOTERRA, contact (202) 260-5914, 8-202-260-5914 (FTS).

Innovative Uses
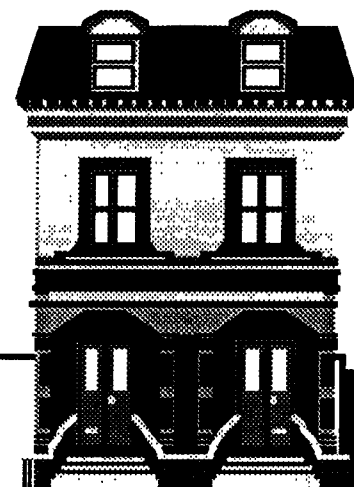
Clearinghouses

The Center for Environmental Learning in Region 3 was created to serve as a clearinghouse for general environmental education information. The Center's objective is to improve the public understanding of current and emerging policy issues and to increase opportunities for the public to communicate with EPA. The Center disseminates information in the following manners:

- Sponsoring environmental lectures and seminars

- Presenting Region 3 Environmental Education Awards to exemplary education programs in various categories

- Participating in the President's Environmental Youth Awards Program and the Adopt-a-School Program.

In the future, the Center plans to develop partnerships with nonprofit organizations, industry, state and local governments, and academia.

For more information on the Center, contact (215) 597-9076, 8-215-597-9076 (FTS).

Public Information Centers

This section will discuss utilizing public information centers (PICs) to make information available to the public. PICs can be considered from two standpoints: using an existing PIC to provide an office's information to the public; or developing a PIC (Regions or Laboratories).[3]

Description

PICs have been established in Headquarters and in several Regions to provide non-technical information to the public. The Headquarters PIC is the Agency's primary point-of-contact for those interested in non-technical information provided by the program offices or OCEPA about the environment and EPA. PICs are usually accessed via the mail, phone, or walk-in. PICs also refer technical questions to the appropriate program or administrative offices, clearinghouses, hotlines, dockets, etc. PICs distribute some information themselves but often use other distribution mechanisms for large volume orders.

Issues Associated with Use

The following issues should be considered when evaluating the potential usefulness of a PIC and when establishing plans for developing a PIC:

- *Accessibility* - The office needs to consider which audiences they are trying to reach and these audiences' needs with regard to accessing information. As the majority of a PIC's audience is usually the general public, the Center should be accessible through several means, including telephone, mail, and fax.

- *Information Collection* - How is the information maintained in the PIC going to be collected? What procedures need to be established to ensure that the PIC has the latest publications, videos, etc. in the particular topic area?

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[3] The distribution capabilities of PICs are also discussed in Chapter V on distribution mechanisms.

- *Information Quality* - What level of quality is going to be required by the audiences demanding information from the PIC? How current does the information need to be? What procedures should be established to ensure that high quality, current information is made available to the public?

- *Services* - The types and extent of services that the PIC is going to offer must be clearly defined and then the resources must be provided to support these services. For example, is the PIC going to distribute publications or is it going to use another distribution mechanism? Is the PIC going to directly answer questions or refer callers to "experts" within the Agency? Is the PIC going to provide onsite, walk-in services?

- *Staffing* - PIC employees need to possess not only a general knowledge of the Agency and of environmental issues, but also appropriate interpersonal skills to assist callers or walk-in visitors.

- *Cost* - Cost must be considered not only from the viewpoint of the cost of the PIC to EPA, but also with regard to deciding if and how to charge members of the public for information obtained from a PIC.

- *Publicity* - For a PIC to be utilized, the public must be aware of it. Therefore, EPA needs to consider means of publicizing the PIC and its functions and services. Chapter VI provides further outreach information.

After considering these and any other identified issues, EPA managers should be able to decide if a PIC is appropriate for meeting the needs of the particular audience.

Benefits and Limitations

There are a number of benefits and limitations of utilizing PICs to make information available to the public. These are described below:

Benefits

- PICs usually offer several means of access (e.g., telephone, mail, and walk-in), so they do not exclude users based on access capabilities.

- PICs usually focus specifically on the needs of the general public, so all brochures, pamphlets, and other documents are targeted for that audience.

- PICs with telephone service provide immediate access to information and allow requesters who do not have clearly defined needs to receive assistance.

- PICs offer Headquarters and Regional offices expertise and assistance in disseminating information to the general public.

Limitations

- PICs can be labor and, therefore, resource intensive depending upon the level of services that is offered.

- PICs with hotlines and walk-in services have additional challenges in finding and retaining staff that have an appropriate level of EPA and environmental knowledge and that have good interpersonal skills.

- PICs can have difficulty identifying and obtaining current, appropriate information to distribute to users.

PICs clearly have real benefits in terms of providing the general public access to information. However, these benefits should be weighed against the limitations to determine if this is an appropriate access point. Offices that can be contacted for more information on developing and operating PICs are given on the next page.

CONTACTS

Office of Information Resources Management, Information Access Branch, (202) 260-8710, 8-202-260-8710 (FTS)

Region 10, Office of Public Affairs (206) 553-1107, 8-206-553-1107 (FTS)

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Libraries

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This section will discuss utilizing libraries to make environmental information available to the public.

Description

Both EPA and non-EPA libraries can be utilized to make information available to the public. EPA libraries primarily support EPA decision making with special "corporate" information products and services. However, EPA library collections are also open to the public. EPA's library network is comprised of 28 Headquarters, Regional, and Laboratory Libraries which maintain paper-based information as well as information in microform and electronic (e.g., CD ROMs) formats. EPA libraries provide information on a variety of environmental subjects ranging from technical to non-technical as well as on the Agency itself. References to this information are listed on the Online Library System (OLS) as well as on the national cataloging system, the Online Computer Library Catalog (OCLC). OLS is available to the public at no charge. Libraries also refer requesters to program and administrative offices or other access points as necessary. EPA libraries are accessed onsite and through phone calls and letters.

State environmental libraries, Federal Depository Libraries, and public libraries also provide access to environmental information. State government environmental organizations (e.g., Departments of Natural Resources) usually have libraries dedicated to environmental information. Additionally, GPO's Federal Depository Library Program makes federal information available to any of the 1,400 depositories across the country who request environmental information.[4]

Issues Associated with Use

The following issues should be considered when evaluating the potential for using libraries to make information available to the public.

- *Accessibility* - EPA programs must enable their Printing Control Officer to assure that the local EPA library receives

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[4] Further information on the Depository Library Program is given in Chapter V on distribution mechanisms.

two copies of each publication. EPA offices may also want to provide publications access through public, academic, or special interest libraries. All of these libraries also provide access to electronic, microfiche, and multimedia information products.

- *Information Collection* - How will the information be given to the library? What procedures need to be established to ensure that the library has the latest publications, etc. in the particular topic area?

- *Information Quality* - What level of quality is going to be required by the audiences demanding information from the library? How current does the information need to be? What procedures should be established to ensure that this level of quality is attained in each document, etc. and that information made available to the public through libraries is current?

- *Services* - The types and extent of services that a library offers must be understood to ensure that they match the needs of the audiences. For example, does the library provide adequate onsite services? These types of services could be especially important for general audiences who are not as certain about the types of information they need.

- *Cost* - Cost must be considered not only from the viewpoint of the cost of using a library to EPA, but also with regard to deciding if and how the library charges members of the public for information. The fact that public services are already provided by the library will make using libraries less expensive than developing an access point especially for a certain type of information.

- *Publicity* - For members of the public to access information in a library, they must be aware that the library is the place to go. Therefore, EPA needs to consider means of publicizing that its information is available through libraries. Chapter VI provides suggestions in this area.

After considering these and any other identified issues, EPA managers should be able to decide if making information available to a library is appropriate for their audiences.

Benefits and Limitations

There are a number of benefits and limitations of utilizing libraries to make information available to the public. These are described below:

Benefits

- Libraries usually offer several means of access (e.g., telephone, mail, electronic, and walk-in), so they do not exclude users based on access capabilities.

- Libraries are often equipped to disseminate information in a variety of media which meets the needs of various users.

- The onsite services offered by libraries provide an individual touch as they are usually staffed by individuals skilled in assisting requesters in locating and using information. EPA libraries are staffed by librarians with environmental knowledge as well.

- Use of libraries allows the EPA office to capitalize upon the expertise that libraries have in responding to public requests instead of building the expertise themselves.

- Many libraries already possess the equipment required to access microfilm, microfiche, and CD ROMs, so each office does not have to invest in these themselves.

- EPA and Depository Libraries exist across the country, so information can be made available in diverse geographic locations.

- Depository Libraries can choose selected topics and, therefore, can have sections tailored to local needs and issues.

- Regional Depository Libraries permanently maintain government publications so they can offer an ongoing record of information.

Limitations

- Due to the breadth and depth of material that many libraries maintain, it may be difficult for each library to have a staff member who has an appropriate level of technical knowledge in each environmental area. Therefore, users may have some difficulty having detailed questions answered.

- Libraries can have difficulty identifying and obtaining current, appropriate information to distribute to users.

Libraries offer real benefits for making information available to the public, particularly for information that does not require extensive explanation or interpretation. Discussions of how libraries have been used to provide access to information are given on the following pages. Additionally, offices that can be contacted for information on using libraries are given below.

CONTACTS

Office of Information Resources Management, Information Access Branch, (513) 569-7183, 8-513-569-7183 (FTS)

Agency Printing Officer, (202) 260-2125, 8-202-260-2125 (FTS)

The Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Office of Program Management and Evaluation, Toxics Release Inventory, (202) 260-3938, 8-202-260-3938 (FTS)

EPA Headquarters Library (202) 260-5922, 8-202-260-5922 (FTS)

Innovative Uses
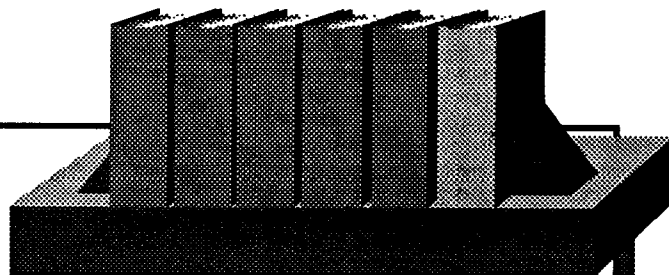
Libraries

The Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) utilizes libraries as the primary intermediary for making information available to the public. This includes the public library system (e.g., state, county, and city libraries) as well as the Depository Library System. These libraries have access to the following TRI information:

- TRI database through the National Library of Medicine
- TRI diskettes for each state
- Microfiche copies of data for each state
- CD ROM versions of the database
- TRI National Report summarizing TRI data by regions, manufacturing sectors, and a variety of other measures.

For more information on the use of libraries, contact the Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Toxic Release Inventory, (202) 260-3938 8-202-260-3938 (FTS).

Innovative Uses
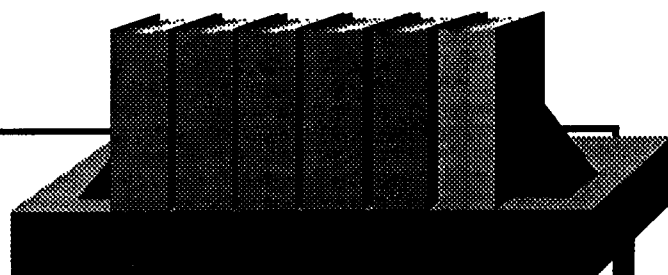
Libraries

EPA distributed at no charge copies of the *Access EPA* series to public, school, and academic libraries throughout the country. The purpose of *Access EPA* is to provide a guide to EPA information resources, services, and products and, thereby, to promote convenient access to environmental information. Through providing easy access to information, EPA hopes to promote citizen involvement in environmental decision making.

Libraries were chosen as they are an information resource with which the public is familiar and which the public frequents to obtain other information. By making *Access EPA* available through libraries, the Agency is promoting public use of its information as well as encouraging efficient access to its information. More efficient access will, ideally, reduce the number of referrals that EPA offices have to make when a member of the public contacts the Agency.

For more information on the distribution of *Access EPA* to libraries, contact the Office of Information Resources Management, Information Access Branch at (202) 260-8710 or 8-202-260-8710 (FTS).

Developing Access Points:
A Summary and Comparison

Access Points	Considerations for Selecting an Access Point				
	Accessibility	Services Offered	Resources Required	Operational Challenges	Information Quality
Hotlines	Can be accessed immediately via a telephone	Offer verbal responses which provide a personalized touch	Can be resource intensive due to staffing requirements	Require adequate staffing and phone lines to ensure service	Can be difficult to ensure quality and consistency in responses
Dockets	Are not always accessible as they operate mainly on a walk-in basis	Allow users to search through rulemaking or regulatory information	Are not as resource intensive due to lower staffing requirements	Require qualified staff to assist users as needed	Must ensure that information received from EPA offices is current
Electronic Bulletin Boards	Provide immediate access for those with computers, modems, and compatible software	Allow users to share information and to immediately extract and manipulate data	Are not as staff-intensive, but require hardware/ software investment	Require user support for subject-related and technically-related issues	Quality problems can occur if user-entered data is not adequately screened
Databases	Provide immediate access for those with computers, modems, and compatible software	Allow users to immediately extract and manipulate data	Can be staff-intensive and require hardware/ software investment	Direct public access to Agency's main-frames is not currently extensive	Quality of some systems may not be adequate for public usage currently

Developing Access Points:
A Summary and Comparison
(cont.)

Access Points	Considerations for Selecting an Access Point				
	Accessibility	Services Offered	Resources Required	Operational Challenges	Information Quality
Clearing-houses	Offer several means of access and thus do not exclude users	Disseminate information in a variety of formats	Can be staff and resource intensive depending on services offered	Require adequate and appropriate staffing to assist the public	Must ensure that information received from EPA offices is current
Public Information Centers	Offer several means of access and thus do not exclude users	Distribute mainly paper-based information targeted at the general public	Can be staff and resource intensive depending on services offered	Require adequate staff with broad base of environmental knowledge	Must ensure that information received from EPA offices is current
Libraries	Offer several means of access and are geographically disbursed	Offer assistance in locating information, and many already possess sophisticated equipment	Usually no cost is born by individual offices	Require ensuring that information is made available to libraries	Must ensure that information received from EPA offices is current
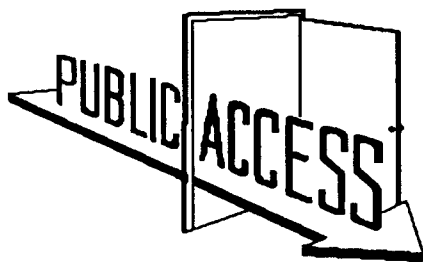
V. UTILIZING DISTRIBUTION MECHANISMS

INTRODUCTION

This section describes organizations that EPA either actively uses to disseminate information to the public or that have the potential to be more actively used by EPA in the dissemination of information. These distribution mechanisms, which are both internal and external to EPA, distribute information in various forms including paper based and electronic formats, such as CD ROM, floppy disk, or magnetic tape.

In this section, the distribution mechanisms are divided into three categories:

- EPA distribution mechanisms

- Federal government sponsored distribution mechanisms

- Partnership opportunities for distributing information (i.e., use of third party organizations to distribute or produce information).

For each organization, practical information on the services is provided, as well as a contact office. A list of contact people is included in Appendix B.

Purpose and Approach

The intent of this section is to better familiarize the reader with some of the different ways in which information can be distributed to the public. There are many issues that should be considered when choosing an appropriate distribution mechanism, such as:

- The ultimate goal (i.e., the message that needs to be communicated)

- The type (i.e., technical/non-technical) of information to be distributed

- The audience that the information needs to reach, and the audience's characteristics

- Whether the associated costs are within the designated budget

- The services (e.g. advertising, feedback mechanisms) provided by the organization.

The information provided in this section will help an office choose the organization that best fits its needs. A contact office for each distribution mechanism is given to answer additional questions pertaining to the practical use of that particular organization. This section provides only a basic discussion on distributing EPA's information. These mechanisms can be utilized to distribute information in a variety of other manners, and offices are encouraged to work with mechanisms to identify additional distribution approaches.

EPA DISTRIBUTION MECHANISMS

EPA Publications and Information Center (EPIC)

Basic Description

EPIC, located in Cincinnati, was formally established in April 1991 and is supported by the Office of Administration and Resources Management. It was established as an Agency information system to respond to the need for enhanced access to an extensive body of environmental information.

Type of Information Distributed

- Non-technical environmental as well as scientific publications

- Multimedia environmental information

- Educational material

Services

EPIC is available to assist programs with the storage, compilation of information packages, and dissemination. Distribution is available on an international scale with distribution for 1991 equaling over 103 million copies. The Center also actively develops collaborative relationships with organizations both internal and external to EPA to store, process, and disseminate environmental information.

The Center operates the EPIC System, an online database updated monthly, which provides search and direct ordering capabilities for over 7,000 current Agency publications and multimedia products maintained in the Center. The system also provides a historical review of over 24,000 titles

available through Agency program offices, NTIS, or the library system. In addition to its search and ordering capabilities, the system provides the user with monthly inventory information as well as mailing lists and information on customers. The EPIC system is being expanded to accommodate information needs of program offices, Regional offices, dockets, clearinghouses, and libraries. Users will be able to extract data to produce subject specific "mini-catalogs." Additionally, efforts are underway to develop a comprehensive Agency catalog using the EPIC system.

Audience Reached Through Distribution

- State and local governments
- Other federal agencies
- EPA
- General public
- Academia
- Interest groups
- Industry.

Access/Dissemination

EPIC responds to requests by mail, fax, telephone, the new EPIC system, and work requests from the Agency. The Center distributes publications and multimedia environmental information.

Associated Costs

There are currently over 40 clients throughout the Agency who have established accounts with EPIC. Essentially, program offices pay for the publications, postage, handling, and users can request them free of charge. There are standard procedures for establishing an account. For further information, contact (513) 569-7980.

Advertising Mechanisms

- Marketing brochures are being developed for wide distribution.

- Informal advertising is conducted at Agency information workshops and seminars

Feedback Method

- In these early stages, no formal feedback mechanisms are in place. Customer service is provided on a personal basis with follow-up to ensure satisfaction.

CONTACT

EPIC, (513) 569-7980, 8-513-569-7980 (FTS)

Center for Environmental Research Information (CERI)

Basic Description

CERI, located in Cincinnati, Ohio, was founded by the Office of Research and Development (ORD) in 1977 to provide consistency in research information. CERI provides a critical link between EPA's research and development community and user groups through its Technical Information and Technology Transfer Groups.

Type of Information Distributed

- Technical information related to research and development and Superfund

- Multimedia information transfer through:

  - Publications
  - Workshops and seminars
  - Conferences
  - Videos
  - Electronic products (e.g., expert systems, data bases, ORD bulletin board).

Services

CERI's Technical Information Group provides support for the publication of technical information for ORD and Superfund. This includes assistance with document preparation, numbering, printing and distribution. The Technology Transfer Group assists in the development of projects to support cost-effective implementation and enforcement of EPA regulations for businesses and municipalities. This includes developing workshops and seminars targeted at specific audiences as well as applying sophisticated communication technologies to reach appropriate audiences. For example, CERI has developed an expert system for environmental pollution control to assist municipalities in the evaluation of pollution abatement technologies.

Audience Reached Through Distribution

- Regions

- States

- Municipalities

- Regulated community (design engineers, scientific and technical personnel)

- Academia.

Access/Dissemination

CERI responds to written and telephone inquiries for specific publications and products. CERI also develops and conducts seminars, workshops, training sessions, and videoconferences for targeted technical audiences on specific subjects. Additionally, the Center maintains an electronic bulletin board which fosters communication between user groups and distributes research and development information.

Associated Costs

- CERI's services are provided at no cost to users.

- EPA program offices who use CERI services pay for all or part of the costs depending on the volume associated with the request

Advertising Mechanisms

- Distributes newsletters highlighting the availability of publications to an established mailing list and other requesters

- Distributes announcements of seminars and workshops to selected target audiences

- Advertises informally through seminars, conventions, newsletters, and professional journals and magazines.

Feedback Method

- Surveys participants in workshops and seminars for feedback

- Refers all questions of a specific technical nature to relevant EPA project officers.

CONTACT

CERI, (513) 569-7391, 8-513-569-7391 (FTS)

Headquarters Public Information Center (PIC)

Basic Description

The Headquarters Public Information Center (PIC) was established to provide non-technical, citizen-oriented information about the environment and EPA to the public. The PIC is operated by the Office of Information Resources Management.

Type of Information

- Brochures on EPA programs
- Fact sheets and pamphlets on environmental topics
- Consumer guides
- Educational materials.

Services

The Headquarters PIC works with program offices to distribute documents, fact sheets, and other types of information to the general public and assists program offices with assessment of public demand for information on key topics. The staff members work closely with the Regions to provide equitable allocation of public information materials. In addition, the PIC provides on-site information services for EPA staff and visitors, as well as providing EPA staff with materials for display and distribution at conferences and other outreach opportunities. The PIC also serves as a central referral point for the Agency. Technical questions are referred to program offices, clearinghouses, hotlines, dockets, and other access points, where appropriate.

Audience Reached Through Distribution

- Teachers
- Students
- Consumers
- Special interest
- Federal, state, and local governments
- Industry.

Access/Dissemination

The Headquarters PIC responds to telephone, written, and walk-in inquiries for non-technical information (approx. 6,000/month). It distributes mainly paper-based information in the form of fact sheets, pamphlets, and brochures. Requests for distribution of high volume documents are forwarded to CERI, GPO, EPIC, and NTIS. `

Associated Costs

- Users are not charged.

Advertising Mechanisms

- Informal advertising is conducted through scholastic magazines, newspapers and home journals.

Feedback Method

- Monthly reports are provided to programs on frequently asked questions and most heavily demanded information

- There are no formal mechanisms to obtain feedback from users.

CONTACT

OIRM, Information Access Branch, (202) 260-8710, 8-202-260-8710 (FTS)

Regional Public Information Centers

Basic Description

The Public Information Center in Region 10 was established in response to the high volume of requests for environmental information from the general public. Other regions utilize libraries, in a similar manner, to fulfill requests.

Type of Information

- Brochures on EPA programs
- Fact sheets and pamphlets on environmental topics
- Consumer guides
- Educational materials.

Services

The Regional PIC provides walk-in informational services in addition to access by mail and telephone. Additionally, the PIC refers technical requesters to appropriate sources within program offices. Region 10 also operates a toll-free hotline for the PIC.

Audience Reached Through Distribution

- General public
- Teachers
- Students
- State and local governments
- Industry
- Interests groups.

Access/Dissemination

The Regional PIC responds to telephone (a toll free hotline in Region 10), written, fax, and walk-in inquiries for non-technical information. It distributes mainly paper-based information in the form of fact sheets, pamphlets, and brochures.

Associated Costs

- No costs are charged to the user. Program offices pay for publications, etc.

Advertising Mechanisms

The Region 10 PIC advertises its services and information through:

- Including its phone number in all Region 10 publications, press releases, and general information

- Including a Region 10 PIC bookmark with every publication that is sent out.

Feedback Method

- No formal feedback mechanisms are used, although informal follow-up calls are made to requesters of information.

CONTACTS

Region 10 Public Information Center, (206) 553-4973, 8-206-553-4973 (FTS)

Region 10 Hotline for Region 10 States, 1-800-424-4EPA

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPONSORED DISTRIBUTION SERVICES

The following section provides details on distribution services sponsored by the federal government.

Government Printing Office (GPO)

Basic Description

GPO was established by Congress in 1861 for the purpose of producing and procuring printing for Congress and federal agencies. GPO's mission also includes the dissemination of information to the public through the Superintendent of Documents publication sales and Depository Library programs.

Type of Information

- All federal government documents

Services

GPO provides a full range of printing, binding, graphic art services, distribution, and electronic product development. This is accomplished through GPO's in-house production facilities or by procurement from the private sector. Products range from state-of-the-art electronic publishing to hand binding and all phases of Compact Disk Read Only Memory (CD ROM) development, including preparing data, acquiring information search and retrieval software, and contracting for disk manufacture. Through GPO's Typography and Design Division (T&D), typography, design, illustration, photography, video, and quality control services are provided. This division provides free preliminary consultations with graphic arts and design specialists to resolve document style and production questions. A "Dial-Up"

Composition Service is also offered by GPO for customers to view information online prior to printing. GPO's procurement power extends nationwide with a network of 13 regional and 6 satellite offices located in areas of high volume work. These offices offer the same type of services to regions as the main office provides to customers in Washington, D.C.

Audience Reached Through Distribution

- General public
- Regions/labs
- States/local governments
- Federal agencies
- Industry
- Interest groups
- Depository libraries
- International organizations.

Access/Dissemination

GPO sells publications through government bookstores and provides access to information (publications, microfiche, and CD ROMs) through Depository Libraries. GPO also responds to telephone and written inquiries for specific publications.

Associated Costs

- Users are charged a fee based on the cost of the product or document plus 50%

- Discount offered to bulk distributors.

Advertising Mechanisms

- Formal advertising program through brochures, pamphlets, television, and radio.

Feedback Method

- Informal feedback through interaction with Depository Libraries.

CONTACT

EPA/GPO Liaison, (202) 260-2125, 8-202-260-2125 (FTS)

Federal Depository Libraries

Basic Description

The Depository Library Program was created by Congress in the early 1800's in order to promote the American public's awareness of the federal government. Title 44 of the United States Code established the Federal Depository Library Program, which requires federal government agencies and their contractors to print publications according to Federal printing regulations. GPO then distributes these documents to approximately 1400 Depository Libraries across the country. The Depository Libraries are required by law to make their depository collections open to the public and provide the public access to government information at no cost.

Type of Information

- All federal government documents

Services

Each year Depository Libraries select titles from a list of more than 6,000 categories of publications. Therefore, each library tailors its collection to local needs. Fifty regional Depository Libraries receive every unclassified government publication of interest to the public and have undertaken the responsibility of retaining this material permanently on paper or microfiche. Inter-library loan and reference services are also provided.

Audience Reached Through Distribution

- General public

Access/Dissemination

The Depository Libraries are required by law to make their depository collections open to the public and provide the public access to government information at no cost.

Associated Costs

- No costs are charged to users.
- Program offices pay the cost of the publication.

Advertising Mechanisms

- Formal advertising through brochures, pamphlets, and television

Feedback Method

- Informal feedback is available through the Depository Libraries.

CONTACT

Office of Information and Resources Management, Information Access Branch, (513) 569-7183, 8-513-569-7183 (FTS)

National Technical Information Service (NTIS)

Basic Description

The Department of Commerce was directed by Congress in 1950 to operate a national clearinghouse to collect, store, and distribute scientific and technical information. In 1970, the national clearinghouse was reestablished as the National Technical Information Service and expanded to include business, health, and statistical information in the collections.

Type of Information

• Scientific, technical, business, health, and statistical information in the form of publications, periodicals, computer data files, and computer software.

Services

NTIS provides a complete, centralized information management system that stores, processes, and distributes an agency's information. When information products are provided to NTIS, the staff members create a bibliographic record for each item, lists the item in the NTIS online database, and maintains the item in the archive. NTIS also handles all administrative and accounting details for the sale of products, takes care of subscription details, stores information, and makes it available for retrieval. NTIS also provides online access to numerous databases located on EPA's mainframe (IBM and VAX Cluster). NTIS prepares the online agreement, gains approval from the proper program authority, prepares the customer registration records, and bills the customer for computer time used. EPA is then reimbursed for these charges.

The Federal Computer Products Center, as part of NTIS, works with agencies to collect and announce computer products that are useful to businesses and the scientific community. The Center manages subscriptions for data files on tapes or diskettes and provides services to convert data contained on magnetic tapes to diskettes. The NTIS Federal Research in Progress (FEDRIP) Database lists an agency's current research projects, making them easy to access through private sector vendors. This database, which is updated monthly, lists project title, start date, project summary, and various other information. For a free copy of the NTIS Products and Services Catalog

that details NTIS services, call (703) 487-4650 and request catalog number PR-827.

Audience Reached Through Distribution

- Government
- Industry
- Academia
- Libraries
- Interest groups.

Access/Dissemination

Publications requests are taken by telephone, mail, commercial online database information companies, or by direct access to the automated NTIS ordering system. Documents are in both printed and microfiche format, and NTIS distributes magnetic tapes, diskettes, CD ROMs and digital tapes.

Associated Costs

Users are charged a fee for products. Agencies may be charged a registration fee per document for permanent archiving and other services.

Advertising Mechanisms

- Formal advertising through announcement media and promotional material

  - Governments Report Announcement and Index
  - Weekly subject-specific newsletters
  - NTIS Bibliographic Database
  - FEDRIP
  - Catalogs, directories, and direct mail
  - Trade announcements
  - Media.

Feedback Method

- Requests reviewed periodically to determine usage

CONTACT

NTIS, (703) 487-4650, 8-703-487-4650 (FTS)

Consumer Information Center (CIC)

Basic Description

The Consumer Information Center (CIC), which is funded by Congress, is located administratively in the General Services Administration. The CIC was established in 1970 to help federal agencies distribute information to the general public and to make the public aware of the availability of this material. The CIC's Pueblo, CO distribution center is now the central source of federal information for the general public.

Type of Information

* Consumer booklets

Services

The CIC provides editorial assistance in planning, revising, and evaluating publications. The CIC staff members also review outlines or draft copies of publications for both clarity and consumer relevance. Another service that is provided by the CIC is a cooperative publishing program which assists federal agencies in the gathering, promotion and distribution of consumer information developed collaboratively by several federal agencies or by government working with private industry.

Audience Reached Through Distribution

* Primarily general public

Access/Dissemination

The CIC distributes publications through the mail, filling requests within seven working days. It distributes paper-based documents through the Colorado facility.

Associated Costs

The cost depends on which one of three methods of distribution is used:

- The Free Booklet Program does not charge customers. The appropriate federal agency pays for printing and distribution. Promotion and evaluation services are provided free of charge.

- The Low Priced Publication Program (LPP) charges customers 50 cents for the publication. The appropriate federal agency pays for printing. GPO administers the billing and collects the 50 cents to pay for shipping and handling expenses. The publication must weigh less than 4 ounces.

- The GPO Sales Program charges customers various prices for publications. The appropriate federal agency develops the publication, and GPO determines the cost to charge the customer to cover printing and distributing the document.

The CIC reviews the publication's subject and audience and recommends to the agency which distribution option would be most effective. The agency chooses the option based on the publication's message, and audience, as well as the resources available to support it. The CIC weighs all these factors in selecting publications to be listed in its quarterly catalog.

Advertising Mechanisms

- The CIC promotes selected consumer booklets by listing them in the free quarterly *Consumer Information Catalog*

- The CIC also regularly promotes selected publications through "News for Consumers" press releases to approximately 6,000 newspapers, magazines, and consumer organizations. These press releases highlight information from booklets in the catalog.

- Radio announcements.

- Special media promotions with selected magazines on current topics.

Feedback Method

- Once a year the CIC conducts surveys to find out customer reaction to publications and new topics of interest.

- Publication evaluation surveys can be done for free publications.

CONTACT

CIC/EPA Agency Liaison, (202) 501-1794, 8-202-501-1794 (FTS)

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

This section describes ways in which EPA can work with other organizations (e.g., state environmental organizations, other federal agencies, interest groups, and private companies) to produce or distribute information to the public. The Office of Environmental Education in OCEPA can also identify opportunities for forming partnerships with schools to disseminate environmental information. Often times it is better to work with another organization who has mutual goals and interests because through working together each party benefits. The benefits for both parties may include:

- Lower costs
- Positive public reaction
- Increased expertise on subject matter
- Pooling of staff time
- Creation of a positive working relationship
- Increased distribution by expanding number of outlets.

There are some general guidelines that should be taken into consideration when deciding whether it would be beneficial to engage in a partnership. These guidelines include:

- Determine what the goal/message is that needs to be communicated

- Determine who the audience is that the message is to reach

- Identify the key players with similar interests, goals, and audiences

- Determine the budget of the project

• Contact an EPA legal advisor (e.g., Office of General Counsel or Office of Regional Counsel) if any questions arise as to whether this partnership is in violation of EPA rules.

The following pages provide examples of how EPA offices have entered into partnerships with third parties to distribute information. OCEPA's manual, "Communicating with the Public," also illustrates ways in which Agency offices can form partnerships with other organizations.

STATE ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

State Environmental Organization: Individual States

Description of Organization:

Approximately 90 percent of EPA laws are implemented by the states. States, therefore, can serve as a useful partner in the dissemination of information. Each program has a contact at the state level, and EPA staff members can work with that person to disseminate information.

EPA Partnership Experience:

The Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) has cooperated with the states to distribute publications. When producing a brochure, Pesticides has produced extra sets of negatives (the cost is minimal) and sent the negatives to the state contact. These negatives are accompanied by a letter stating the intent of the brochure and encouraging states to add state-specific information to the brochure and distribute it to the public.

CONTACT

OCEPA, (202) 260-4355, 8-202-260-4355 (FTS)

State Environmental Organization: Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)

Description of Organization:

ASTHO represents the nation's state public health officials.

EPA Partnership Experience:

OPP maintains a cooperative agreement with ASTHO which provides for improved communication between OPP and state health officials. ASTHO communicates relevant information to the public and collaborates with EPA on projects which promote understanding of environmental issues from the health perspective. In addition, the cooperative agreement provides avenues for keeping the regulatory community appraised of OPP actions regarding health issues.

CONTACT

Office of Pesticide Programs, (703) 305-7371, 8-703-305-7371 (FTS)

State Environmental Organization: National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA)

Description of Organization:

NASDA represents the interests of state departments of agriculture.

EPA Partnership Experience:

On September 9, 1991, Deputy Administrator Habicht entered into a memorandum of understanding with Mr. C. Alan Pettibone, President of NASDA, to provide a coordinated structure for conducting communication activities with the public and other interested parties. The scope of information covered by the memorandum includes pesticides and the American food supply, pesticide use in general, and related programs.

CONTACT

Office of Pesticide Programs, (703) 305-7371, 8-703-305-7371 (FTS)

State Environmental Organization: State FIFRA Issues Research and Evaluation Group (SFIREG)

Description of Organization:

SFIREG was created under a cooperative agreement between the Office of Pesticide Programs and the Association of American Pesticide Control Officials (AAPCO). The Pesticide Control Officials are the state personnel with primary responsibility for enforcement of pesticide use.

EPA Partnership Experience:

As an independent, but related body of the American Association of Pesticide Control Officials (AAPCO), SFIREG identifies, analyzes, and provides state comments to the Office of Pesticide Programs on matters relating to pesticide registration, enforcement, training and certification, ground water protection, disposal, and other areas of environmental concern. In addition, SFIREG provides a mechanism for EPA to keep the State Lead Agencies informed and up-to-date on its pesticide regulatory program.

Contact

Office of Pesticide Programs, (703) 305-7371, 8-703-305-7371 (FTS)

OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES

Federal Agency: The Consumer Information Center (CIC)

Description of Organization

The many services provided by the CIC are discussed in detail in the section focusing on Federal Government Sponsored Distribution Mechanisms. The CIC does, however, operate a program that focuses on partnership opportunities. This program identifies partners for joint production of a publication and provides editorial and design assistance for the publication. The CIC publishes a pamphlet entitled "Industry and Government: Publishing Together for Everybody's Benefit." This pamphlet presents the details of producing and distributing joint consumer booklets. For information on cooperative publishing, contact CIC's EPA Agency Liaison, at (202) 501-1794/8-241-1794 (FTS).

EPA Partnership Experience:

The following EPA publications were produced through the CIC's joint publishing program:

- *Recycling Used Oil.* Produced by the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response and reprinted by Pennzoil Company

- *A Home Buyer's Guide To Environmental Hazards .* Produced by the Federal National Mortgage Association with EPA, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Thrift Supervision, and the Department of Veteran's Affairs.

Subjects Under Consideration for Joint Publication:

- Ozone
- Packaging
- Recycling
- Composting
- Recycling plastics/number system
- Disposing of wastes properly
- Lead
- Environmental labeling/definitions
- Emissions control/clean air.

CONTACT

EPA Agency Liaison, (202) 501-1794, 8-202-501-1794 (FTS)

INTEREST GROUPS

Interest Group: Alliance for a Clean Rural Environment and the Food Marketing Association

EPA Partnership Experience:

Often times non-profit organizations will work with EPA and print publications provided to them by the Agency at their own cost. For example, the Office of Pesticide Programs worked with the Alliance for a Clean Rural Environment. EPA provided the Alliance with negatives for the "Pesticides in Your Drinking Water" brochure, and the Alliance printed the brochure at its own cost. This type of partnership was also entered into with the Food Marketing Association. The association printed copies of a publication that was funded by the United States Department of Agriculture and the Office of Pesticide Programs.

CONTACT

OCEPA, (202) 260-4355, 8-202-260-4355 (FTS)

Interest Group: National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides

EPA Partnership Experience:

Interest groups are an effective way to reach audiences with specific areas of interest. There are numerous ways to disseminate information through an interest group, such as participating in its conferences, giving it information to disseminate to members, or giving it a contact point in an EPA office to list in its newsletter. The Office of Pesticide Programs has worked with the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides in distributing information in this manner.

CONTACT

OCEPA, (202) 260-4355, 8-202-260-4355 (FTS)

Association: American Lung Association (ALA)

Description of Organization:

The American Lung Association is the oldest nationwide voluntary health agency in the United States. It is dedicated to the fight against lung disease.

EPA Partnership Experience:

The Office of Radiation Programs maintains a cooperative agreement with many groups, including the ALA. Specifically the Office of Radiation Programs has cooperated with the ALA on activities ranging from holding professional conferences and radon home show exhibits, to having children and community leaders test their schools for radon. ALA and EPA have even put messages on the blimps that fly over national football games to inform the public about radon.

CONTACT

Office of Radiation Programs, (202) 260-9617, 8-202-260-9617 (FTS)

Association: Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals in Business (SOCAP)

Description of Organization:

SOCAP is an international professional organization of individuals whose purpose is to:

- Foster and maintain the integrity of business in dealing with consumers

- Encourage and promote effective communication between business, government, and consumers

- Define and advance the consumer affairs profession.

SOCAP has numerous members from local, state, and federal government, including USDA, Department of Commerce, Food and Drug Administration, and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture.

SOCAP provides a forum for communication among all segments involved in the consumer affairs field. The bringing together of individuals with common interests and objectives encourages the exchange of ideas and stimulates personal and professional growth. SOCAP conducts seminars around the country on useful topics, such as:

- Establishing and/or managing an 800 number
- Innovative uses for 800 Numbers
- Managing for customer focus and quality service
- Effective consumer affairs staff management.

SOCAP also produces a monthly newsletter, a quarterly professional journal, special reports, and a membership directory which lists contact information for all members and provides an extensive network of consumer affairs professionals. SOCAP is establishing a "Skills Data Base" which lists members skills, experiences, and backgrounds. This will be on computer and can be used to locate individuals with particular skills or experiences. For example, if someone was interested in establishing an 800 number this database would be able to generate a list of people who have had such experience.

CONTACT

SOCAP, (703) 519-3700

Interest Group/Private Company: Alliance for Environmental Education and Time Warner Brothers

EPA Partnership Experience:

EPA, Time Warner Brothers, and the Alliance for Environmental Education have teamed together in a long-term national campaign to increase the public's awareness and understanding of environmental issues and to promote pollution prevention, recycling, and conservation. The program, which is aimed at the general public, particularly elementary school students, is designated the "Tweety Global Patrol" (TGP) and features Warner Brothers cartoon characters, Tweety bird and Sylvester the cat. TGP will distribute environmental messages through television and radio media, publications, such as magazines, and through the sale of merchandise, such as school lunch boxes. School systems across the country will receive teaching guides, lesson plans, student activity sheets and posters from TGP. Tweety will also make visits to schools and hand out environmental learning materials. Approximately 2.7 million third and fourth graders are likely to be exposed to TGP through the educational system. The educational track of the project, currently being field tested in schools, is expected to be implemented in September 1992. Through this mass media campaign, EPA expects to educate and inform vast segments of the public.

CONTACT

OCEPA, (202) 260-2066, 8-202-260-2066 (FTS)

PRIVATE COMPANIES

Private Company: Supermarket Communication System

Description of Organization:

The Supermarket Communication System is a private company which operates the "Good Neighbor Boards" at local supermarkets. These boards provide booklets, factsheets, and information cards which allow individuals to request information on certain topics free of charge. The company provides many services to promote the booklets on this information board, such as housing, distribution, and restocking of booklets, targeting the appropriate audiences, distributing the accompanying public service announcement (PSA) to appropriate television stations for viewing, and administering follow-up surveys.

EPA Partnership Experience:

The Office of Water (OW) successfully used this company to distribute its "Lead in Your Drinking Water" booklets. The Office of Water wanted to target the distribution of this booklet to the general public, and the Supermarket Communication System was an effective way to reach that audience. Supermarket Communication Systems worked with the Office of Water in distributing a video PSA. They distributed 40,000 booklets in the Washington D.C./Baltimore area in a three month period, and then went nation-wide and distributed over 385,000 booklets in three months. The Office of Water found this organization to be very cost-effective because it was able to reach a large audience. OW highly recommends the use of this organization for specific issues that would be of interest to the general public who frequent supermarkets. Cost to users varies with the distribution area, type of information distributed, etc.

EPA Partnership Experience:

The Office of Radiation Programs' Radon Division has also successfully used the Supermarket Communication System twice to get its message out to the public. On one occasion, it distributed the "Guide to Radon in Schools," a brochure which informed the reader of the hazards of radon in schools, and provided them with information on testing their schools for radon. The Office of Radiation Programs also teamed up with the American Lung Association for National Radon Action Week and distributed coupons through the Good Neighbor Board for the purchase of radon test kits at cost. The Office of Radiation Programs was pleased with the services provided by the Supermarket Communication System because it was able to target its audience, and distribute a large quantity of brochures at a reasonable cost.

CONTACTS

Office of Water, (202) 260-2285, 8-202-260-2285 (FTS)

Office of Radiation Programs, (202) 260-9617, 8-202-260-9617 (FTS)

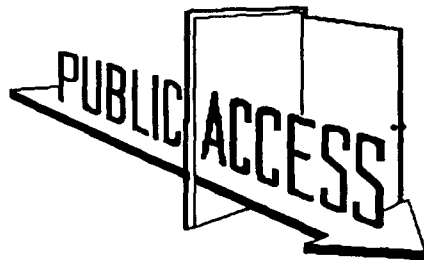Supermarket Communication System, (203) 852-0888

Utilizing Distribution Mechanisms:
A Summary and Comparison

Considerations for Selecting EPA Distribution Mechanisms					
Distribution Mechanisms	Type of Information	Audience	Services	Cost	Advertising/ Feedback Mechanisms
EPA Publications & Information Center	Multi-media, technical and non-technical information	Government, EPA, general public, academia, interest groups	Assists with compilation and dissemination of information. Indexes all products on a database	Users are not charged. Program offices pay for publications, etc.	Marketing brochures are being developed. Informal calls to requesters for feedback
Center for Environmental Research (CERI)	Multi-media technical information	Government, EPA, academia, regulated community	Provides support for the publication of technical information for ORD and Superfund	Users are not charged. Program offices pay for all or part of the cost of the services	Advertising in newsletters, announcements and informally at conventions and seminars
Headquarters Public Information Center	Brochures, fact sheets, consumer guides, and educational information on environmental topics	General public	Helps offices distribute information, assesses public demand for information, and provides walk-in information services	Users are not charged. Program offices pay for publications, etc.	Advertising in scholastic magazines and home journals. No formal feedback
Regional Public Information Center	Brochures, fact sheets, consumer guides, and educational information on environmental topics	General public, including teachers, and students, as well as local governments	Distributes environmental information and provides walk-in information services	No costs are charged to user. Program offices pay for publications, etc.	Advertising in regional publications. Informal calls to requesters for feedback

Utilizing Distribution Mechanisms:
A Summary and Comparison

Distribution Mechanisms	Considerations for Selecting EPA Distribution Mechanisms				
	Type of Information	Audience	Services	Cost	Advertising/ Feedback Mechanisms
EPA Publications & Information Center	Multi-media, technical and non-technical information	Government, EPA, general public, academia, interest groups	Assists with compilation and dissemination of information. Indexes all products on a database	Users are not charged. Program offices pay for publications, etc.	Marketing brochures are being developed. Informal calls to requesters for feedback
Center for Environmental Research (CERI)	Multi-media technical information	Government, EPA, academia, regulated community	Provides support for the publication of technical information for ORD and Superfund	Users are not charged. Program offices pay for all or part of the cost of the services	Advertising in newsletters, announcements and informally at conventions and seminars
Headquarters Public Information Center	Brochures, fact sheets, consumer guides, and educational information on environmental topics	General public	Helps offices distribute information, assesses public demand for information, and provides walk-in information services	Users are not charged. Program offices pay for publications, etc.	Advertising in scholastic magazines and home journals. No formal feedback
Regional Public Information Center	Brochures, fact sheets, consumer guides, and educational information on environmental topics	General public, including teachers, and students, as well as local governments	Distributes environmental information and provides walk-in information services	No costs are charged to user. Program offices pay for publications, etc.	Advertising in regional publications. Informal calls to requesters for feedback

INTRODUCTION

This section focuses on public outreach; the Agency's means of actively keeping the public informed on environmental issues and promoting their involvement with the environment. The Agency currently participates in a variety of outreach activities to foster this type of interest and involvement. The purpose of this section is to encourage usage of these outreach activities within the Agency through discussing:

- Public information materials
- Outreach tools.

The intent is to inform EPA offices of the potential for promoting effective access through outreach. Information on the full range of public communication opportunities is available in *Spreading the Word: A Guide to OCEPA Services,* available through OCEPA's Communication Planning Division.

PUBLIC INFORMATION MATERIALS

Public information materials include available directories that can be used by the public or Agency to locate information on any given environmental topic. These reference materials are valuable resources in promoting both the public's and EPA's awareness of and ability to locate information. Most of these materials are compilations of EPA program information for the purpose of providing effective access. A better understanding of the various sources of information within the Agency can facilitate the process of responding to public requests.

This subsection identifies a selection of EPA's key public information materials and describes how they can be used and obtained. The directories indicated below will be discussed in further detail.

- *Access EPA*
- *Information Systems Inventory*
- Online Library System
- EPA Telephone Directories
- Program Reference Manuals.

This sample of public information materials should be used as a starting point for identifying the types of information available at EPA and where this information is located. EPA offices are encouraged to utilize these tools to promote effective public access.

ACCESS EPA

Basic Description

Access EPA consists of a series of directories that are produced by the Office of Information Resources Management to facilitate locating environmental information and services provided by EPA and other public sector organizations. The directories contain contact information and a description of services provided by each information resource. Current directories in the series are identified below.

- Public Information Tools
- Major EPA Dockets
- Clearinghouses and Hotlines
- Records Management Programs
- Major EPA Environmental Databases
- Library and Information Services
- State Environmental Libraries.

Access EPA is updated annually and is available in a single, consolidated volume or as a set of booklets. *Access EPA* is available to the public at many libraries throughout the country and is also for sale through GPO at (202) 783-3238, order number 055-000-00378-5, or NTIS at (800) 553-NTIS, order number 055-000-003738-5. There are forms contained in the directories for updating and commenting on information. Once completed, these forms can be submitted to the office designated in the directory for inclusion in the next issue. For additional information on *Access EPA*, please contact the Headquarters Library as listed below.

CONTACT
OIRM Information Access Branch (202) 260-8710, 8-202-260-8710 (FTS)

Information Systems Inventory

Basic Description

The *Information Systems Inventory* *(ISI)* is a collection of information on 600 EPA automated data systems, models, and databases. It can be used to identify specific environmental information often requested by the public from various program and administrative offices. The *ISI* is routinely updated and maintained by the Information Management and Services Division within OIRM. For each system listed, the ISI identifies the full system name, the system acronym, if applicable, and the name and phone number of the individual responsible for its development, and/or maintenance. Descriptions of the system contents are not included.

The Inventory is available in both hard copy and automated forms for EPA libraries and specific contacts in Headquarters and Regional offices. The ISI can also be ordered through NTIS at (800) 553-NTIS. For additional information regarding the ISI and its distribution, please contact the office below.

CONTACT

Information Management Branch, OIRM, (202) 260-9732, 8-202-260-9732 (FTS)

Online Library System

Basic Description

The Online Library System (OLS) is a computerized catalog system of the holdings of EPA's 28 network libraries. OLS has been designed to offer an efficient way to search these holdings. For each document listed in the system, OLS provides the author, title, and keyword access to document titles. There are also abstracts of selected titles. OLS can be used by any Agency employee and is available to the public through EPA's libraries. EPA is currently piloting a program which allows the public to directly access OLS on the Agency's mainframe from a personal computer (see Chapter IV for further information on this pilot).

The Information Access Branch of the Information Management and Services Division within OIRM sponsors OLS which is updated every two weeks. For additional information concerning OLS, please refer to the offices referenced below.

CONTACTS

OIRM/IMSD, Cincinnati - general inquiries, (513) 569-7183, 8-513-569-7183 (FTS)

EPA National Computer Center, RTP NC - pilot project, (919) 541-2794, 8-919-541-2794 (FTS)

EPA Telephone Directories

Basic Description

EPA publishes several phone directories which contain a variety of information on Headquarters or Regional organizational structures, services, and employees. The directories can be used to facilitate locating relevant individuals to respond to requests. The directories are described in more detail below.

- *Headquarters Telephone Directory* - This main directory is organized in sections which identify offices, their structure, and employees. The following list includes each main section contained within the directory.

  - Emergency Telephone Numbers
  - How to Use Your Telephone
  - Organizational Directory
  - Alphabetical Directory
  - Headquarters Subject Directory
  - Regional Directory
  - Electronic Mail Directory
  - Facsimile Directory
  - Selected Washington Agency Directory
  - General Information.

  The Headquarters directory is published semiannually, normally in February and September, by the Government Printing Office (GPO). Headquarters directories are distributed to all Headquarters employees and to each Region. Additional copies can be ordered directly through GPO at (202) 783-3238. Updates to the alphabetical listings are made by using a locator change form provided in the directory.

- *Research Triangle Park (RTP) Phone Directory* - Similar to the Headquarters directory, the RTP directory contains the organizational structure for RTP, as well as the Headquarters offices. The directory also contains alphabetical listings for federal and contractor employees. Although it is distributed to employees at the RTP office,

anyone can obtain it through GPO by calling (202) 783-3238.

- *Regional and Laboratory Phone Directories* - Phone directories are maintained by and published within each Regional and laboratory site. To obtain information on acquiring these directories, refer to either the Headquarters Telephone directory or to *Access EPA* which list telephone numbers for the Regional offices and field offices, which can offer assistance.

CONTACT

Telecommunications Manager, Office of Administration and Resources Management, (202) 260-2082, 8-202-260-2082 (FTS)

Program Reference Manuals

Basic Description

Many program offices produce their own reference manuals which contain program specific information as well as program materials and resources. These manuals can be used to facilitate the process of locating information in response to specific programmatic requests. These manuals may provide information on the following topics.

- Training
- Videos
- Publications
- Information Systems.

The *OSWER Source Book*, for example, contains information on training courses, publications, videos, information systems, and software developed by OSWER. *The Pollution Prevention Training Opportunities in 1991 Manual*, published by the Office of Environmental Engineering and Technology, provides references and lists for industry specific fact sheets, videos, educational opportunities, pollution prevention contacts, clearinghouses, and other related resources. Similarly, the Office of Water, published the *Office of Water Environmental and Program Information Systems Compendium*, which identifies the various information systems maintained by water program offices. These are just three examples of the many different references sources available within program offices. Individual program offices should be contacted for further information on their reference manuals.

OUTREACH TOOLS

There are a variety of outreach tools, such as exhibits, press releases, and public service announcements, available to the Agency for actively addressing and engaging the public. These tools are often used to transmit information during various outreach opportunities such as special interest conferences, community activities, special events (e.g., Earth Day), etc. OCEPA's guidance entitled *Spreading the Word: A Guide to OCEPA Services* should be referenced prior to developing outreach tools.

Not only does the guide identify services provided by each of OCEPA's offices, it also provides information on the types of tools or products that each office can help produce. For example, if a decision is made to create an exhibit for an upcoming environmental conference, the Multimedia Services Division could be contacted for guidance and advice on developing an exhibit which best portrays the overall theme of the conference. Similarly, when planning to inform school students about pollution prevention and recycling, the Office of Environmental Education should be contacted for assistance with developing an environmental education project or training program. Because of its expertise in product development, OCEPA should always be contacted to ensure that the methods used, or media developed, comply with Agency standards.

OCEPA CONTACTS

Communications Planning Division, (202) 260-4361, 8-202-260-4361 (FTS)

Public Liaison Division, (202) 260-5195, 8-202-260-5159 (FTS)

Press Relations Division, OCEPA, (202) 260-4355, 8-202-260-4355 (FTS)

Multimedia Services Division, OCEPA, (202) 260-2066, 8-202-260-2066 (FTS)

Environmental Education Division, OCEPA, (202) 260-4962, 8-202-260-4962 (FTS)
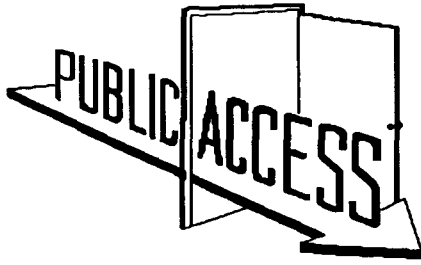
APPENDIX A:

Attachments

This appendix contains the following:

- Public Access Principles

- Electronic Bulletin Board Policy

- "Public Access" by Jerry Slaymaker

- National Water Clearinghouse Questionnaire

- Memorandum on Printing Control Officer Dissemination Role

PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC ACCESS TO EPA INFORMATION

PURPOSE

These principles guide public access to and dissemination of information gathered and maintained by EPA as Agency information.

BACKGROUND

- An informed public is essential to meeting the Agency's mission to protect human health and the environment. Many Agency priority initiatives, such as pollution prevention and risk reduction, require active public involvement. Effective access to environmental information facilitates public participation in environmental protection.

- Public demand for environmental information continues to increase. To respond to this demand, EPA is enhancing its public access efforts across programs and media. It is essential that these various efforts be coordinated and consistent across the Agency.

- In order to carry out our Agency Program missions and policies, EPA is committed to conveying clear, accurate, and timely information to the public, and incorporating information from the public in EPA activities.

- With the increased public interest in environmental information, Congress has focused on the need to provide information to the public. Numerous Federal laws and regulations require the government to make information available to the public in useful format. Some EPA-specific laws and regulations include public access requirements. Examples of Government-wide and Agency legislation include:

  -- OMB Circular No. A-130, "sets basic guidelines for the collection, processing and dissemination of information by the Federal agencies."

  -- The Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act of 1986 or Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) requires EPA to make toxic release "data

accessible by computer telecommunications and other means to any person on a cost reimbursable basis."

-- National Environmental Education Act, 1990, requires government agencies to increase public understanding of the environment by developing and providing educational information and training to the public.

-- Pollution Prevention Act of 1990 expands SARA Title III to include collection and dissemination of information to assist the public and industry in efforts to encourage the reduction or prevention of pollution.

PRINCIPLES

- When access to information, as it is collected or maintained, is restricted by Federal or State requirements for confidentiality, privacy, national defense or enforcement sensitivity, the information shall be processed (e.g., aggregated, summarized, or characterized) as appropriate to provide access while meeting requirements for restriction.

- The Agency shall provide appropriate access to the Agency's information in a cost effective manner.

- Design of all new and enhanced data systems, data collections, and databases, manual or electronic, shall consider the need to permit and facilitate public access to that information.

- All Agency information, regardless of format, shall meet all applicable Federal and Agency standards, such as EPA data standards. These standards help to guarantee the integrity and preservation of Agency information, including the protection of legally restricted information.

- The Agency shall encourage and facilitate the integration of data and information exchange across programs and with Federal and State agencies to improve the usefulness of the information to the public.

- The Agency shall make information available in forms that are useful to the public. It shall identify a point of contact for each major program and information system to receive questions and comments and to coordinate public access activities. Comments may be forwarded by the Program official to the appropriate source, such as a State, for appropriate action.

- The Agency shall leverage its resources by actively exploring alternative mechanisms to permit additional or better access to information, such as public/private partnerships.

DEFINITIONS

- "Access" to information refers to the function of providing to the public, through dissemination mechanisms or upon request, government information.

- "Confidential Business Information" includes trade secrets, proprietary and commercial/financial information, and other information that is afforded protection from disclosure under certain circumstances as described in statutes administered by the Agency.

- "Data" are a collection of facts that have not yet been processed into information. On a continuum ranging from data to information, the point at which data become information depends on the recipient, the question being asked, and its intended use.

- "Dissemination of information" refers to the function of active distribution of government information to the public, whether through printed documents or electronic or other media. Dissemination is distinct from sharing, exchanging, or providing access to data and information.

- "Enforcement Sensitive Information" refers to information or records which are compiled for law enforcement purposes and whose disclosure could reasonably be expected to:

(1)   interfere with enforcement proceedings
(2)   constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
(3)   disclose the identity of a confidential source.
(4)   risk circumvention of the law by revealing techniques, procedures or guidelines for investigations or prosecutions.

- "Information" is any communication or reception of knowledge such as facts, data or opinions, including numerical, graphic or narrative forms, whether oral or maintained in any medium, including computerized data bases, paper, microform, or magnetic tape.

- "Privacy" is the right of an individual to control the collection, storage and dissemination of information about himself/herself to avoid the potential for substantial harm, embarrassment, inconvenience or unfairness.

- "Public" includes all the people of the United States of America including:

  (1)   U.S. citizens
  (2)   Federal, State, tribal and local governments
  (3)   Special interest groups such as health organizations, trade associations, and environmental groups
  (4)   Academia and the research community
  (5)   Industry and the regulated community
  (6)   Journalists/Press

- "Sensitive Information" is information that requires protection due to the risk and magnitude of loss or harm that could result from inadvertent or deliberate disclosure, alteration or destruction of the information.

- "Telecommunications" is the transmission and/or reception of information by telephone, telephone lines, telegraph, radio or other methods of communication over a distance. The information may be in the form of voice, pictures, text and/or encoded data.

TITLE:	NDPD PC Bulletin Board Services	**NO.**	100.19
APPROVAL:	*Donald W Julford*	**DATE:**	/C — 3--4/

1.0 PURPOSE

This policy specifies the support to be provided by NDPD in the use of Agency-wide electronic Personal Computer Bulletin Board Services (PC BBS).

2.0 SCOPE & APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all levels of NDPD's data processing support organization and to all PC bulletin board services that EPA and its contractors operate.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

NDPD is responsible for providing data processing support services to customers throughout the Agency. Within NDPD, the Information Centers Branch (ICB) and the Telecommunications Branch (TCB) are responsible for computer support activities most directly affected by this policy. All employees of EPA, EPA contractors, and EPA grantees are responsible for compliance with the provisions of this policy.

4.0 POLICY

Various EPA offices support over thirty electronic bulletin board services. These BBSs fulfill an essential need for communication throughout the Agency, keeping BBS customers updated on strategic information. Agency BBSs provide services such as electronic distribution of documentation, notices of meetings, electronic conferencing and messaging on environmental areas of study, software updates, and computer programs. As the interest in BBSs has grown within the Agency, so has the need for better PC BBS communications. Advertising the existence of specialized BBSs is difficult for EPA offices. Various offices have requested NDPD to provide BBS EPA network access and advertising for PC BBSs.

This policy defines the NDPD PC BBS network strategy and describes the management requirement associated with connecting a PC BBS to the EPA network. Software and hardware components necessary to provide PC BBS telecommunications services are enumerated. This policy outlines procedures for applying for networked PC BBS connections and announces NDPD advertising support for PC BBSs. This policy defines NDPD BBS system manager and operator support.

An alternative to starting a new PC BBS is using an Agency MAIL BBS. A MAIL BBS can provide electronic conferencing and binary file exchange, while retaining BBS management under a system manager's control. NDPD encourages offices investigating how to start a PC BBS to discuss the capabilities of MAIL BBS with NDPD's Program Management Support Branch.

4.1 PC BBS MANAGEMENT

NDPD requires that an EPA employee (BBS system manager) sponsor a proposed PC BBS for connection to the EPA network. This employee will apply for an EPA network connection by completing an NDPD Telecommunications Service Request (TSR). The TSR will be submitted to the NDPD Telecommunications Branch with a memo stating whether the proposed network PC BBS is available for public access. Refer to Section 4.3 for a detailed description of public access PC BBS issues. The public access BBS system manager will ensure that there is no BBS posting of EPA network access directions or telephone numbers. System managers converting to public access will notify NDPD Telecommunications Branch 30 days before conversion occurs. Public access through the EPA network to the BBS is prohibited and will be blocked electronically. Public access through the PC BBS to the EPA network is also prohibited.

Duties of the BBS system manager include:

- Managing the availability of the BBS.

- Enforcing practices to ensure that the message and file information available to BBS customers is appropriate and virus-free.

- Maintaining and upgrading the BBS hardware and software as necessary.

- Acting as "central point of contact" for NDPD management to resolve procedural problems that may arise.

The technical operations of the BBS can be provided by the system manager or a system operator who is sometimes a contractor. The system operator's duties include:

- Creating bulletin board categories.
- Working with NDPD technical staff to troubleshoot telecommunications problems.
- Providing regularly scheduled tape backups for the PC BBS.
- Running virus checker programs to maintain a virus clean PC BBS.
- Purging old information.
- Performing other PC BBS software and system-related duties.

4.2 PC BBS EPA NETWORK ACCESS

Bona fide EPA employees, state agency representatives, other government agency representatives, EPA contractors, and EPA grantees will gain access to EPA PC BBSs through the EPA network. NDPD Telecommunications Branch will support an X.25 synchronous communications connection to a PC BBS, giving customers 9.6 kb or 19.2 kb access through EPA's packet switched network. The X.25 PC BBS communications link can, theoretically, provide service for up to 64 concurrent customers. Network service levels will vary with the speed of the bulletin board service PC, the number of simultaneous customers, and the type of network traffic generated by the customers (i.e., file transfer vs. reading BBS Email).

4.3   PUBLIC ACCESS TO EPA PC BBSs

This policy defines public access to a BBS as totally unrestricted access to an Agency-sponsored PC BBS. Typical customers who are not classified as public access include EPA personnel, EPA-related contractors, EPA-specified grantees, and members of EPA-associated state and government organizations.

Public access to the PC BBS using the EPA network is prohibited. A system manager of a public access BBS must service these customers by request from NDPD for dial-in lines or toll-free number lines to the BBS. Toll-free lines will be directly connected to the BBS and paid for by the system manager's organization. Public access PC BBSs will be blocked from using toll-free exchanges that permit direct access to the EPA network.

The technology connecting a public access BBS to the EPA network simultaneously provides service to customers from the EPA network without interfering with dialup public access. The BBS can service both types of customers at the same time since the telecommunication traffic is not being mixed between dialup and EPA network access. It is the responsibility of the PC BBS system manager that public access users do not gain access to EPA network dialup procedures or telephone numbers, but remain limited to the direct dialup services of the PC BBS.

4.4   HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE REQUIRED FOR EPA NETWORK ACCESS

NDPD is certifying standard BBS telecommunications hardware, PC hardware, and PC BBS software for EPA BBSs. Galacticomm is the only vendor whose BBS communications hardware and software have been certified and approved with NDPD.

Certification of other BBS hardware and software configurations is possible. The requesting office must set up a working PC BBS at the RTP National Computer Center and invest several days testing a proposed configuration onsite with the Telecommunications Branch support staff. BBS system managers can obtain more information about the certification program by contacting the NDPD Telecommunications Branch. It is anticipated that from two to five certified configurations will be supported in FY1992.

The difference between a certified and noncertified PC BBS is that NDPD will provide software, telecommunications, and hardware system operator support only for certified BBSs. Noncertified PC BBSs can be connected to the network, but the Telecommunications Branch will support telecommunications up to the PC. PC hardware and software troubleshooting will not be provided for noncertified BBSs.

Noncertified PC BBS configurations will be studied when an office submits a BBS TSR. NDPD Telecommunications Branch will develop the best technical solution for connecting the BBS to the EPA network.

Reference Section 4.8 for further information about NDPD PC BBS support.

4.5   RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FUNDING PC BBS NETWORK ACCESS

The Telecommunications Branch will decide whether connecting a specific BBS to the EPA network will result in a telecommunication savings to the Agency. This analysis will be based on usage data for grandfathered BBSs, projected usage for proposed BBSs, number of simultaneous EPA customers, and projected BBS longevity. This information must be submitted with the BBS Telecommunications Service Request.

If placing a BBS on the EPA network is not a substantial savings to the Agency, the owner of the BBS system must fund (non-timeshared funds) all telecommunication costs for connecting the BBS to the network. The owner will fund NDPD-supplied modems and a dedicated line for the EPA network connection. If the BBS is available for public access, the owner will always fund all telephone dial-in lines and any toll-free requested lines. The BBS system manager can contact the NDPD Telecommunications Branch for an estimate of the costs associated with network access.

The BBS system manager will purchase the BBS PC hardware and software.

4.6   PROCEDURE FOR APPLYING FOR BBS NETWORK ACCESS

The BBS system manager must complete a BBS TSR and a memo stating whether or not the proposed BBS will be made available for public access. The TSR must be signed by the system manager's EPA ADP coordinator or IRM chief. The TSR must include a BBS deployment schedule, software and hardware configuration, and information requested in Section 4.5. NDPD Telecommunications Branch will process the BBS TSR and provide the installation cost and yearly cost estimate to the submitting office. The office will then furnish NDPD with a reimbursing purchase requisition.

4.7   ADVERTISING BBS ACCESS TO EPA CUSTOMERS

At the discretion of the system manager, the appropriate user communities will be notified of each newly established BBS service. Each Region will have BBS as a telecommunication service selection on the EPA network. NDPD will include a listing of the BBS in the National Locator System and telephone directories.

4.8   SOFTWARE/HARDWARE/TELECOMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT

NDPD Telecommunications Branch will provide network and dial-in line troubleshooting support in cooperation with the BBS system manager. NDPD Information Centers Branch will provide BBS system operator support for each certified software configuration. BBS system operator support is NDPD Information Centers Branch (ICB) provided telephonic support for BBS system operators who need certified software setup, troubleshooting, and/or consultation assistance.

When new bulletin board software and hardware is certified by the NDPD Telecommunications Branch, NDPD Information Centers Branch will obtain the software, hardware, and training necessary to support the new certified BBS system operators.

4.9   SYSTEM OPERATOR/SYSTEM MANAGER SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

NDPD will establish an Agency MAIL-based BBS (named PCBBS) for system managers and system operators. ICB will be responsible for the management of the PCBBS Email bulletin board. PCBBS will provide improved communications among BBS system managers, system operators, Information Centers Branch software support, and Telecommunications Branch support staff. PCBBS will provide such services as announcing scheduled network mainte-nance, status of network problems, availability of new software releases, and information on common points of interest.

NDPD Telecommunications Branch will notify NDPD Information Centers Branch when a new PC BBS joins the EPA network. This notification will alert NDPD Information Centers Branch that an additional system manager is to be added to the PC BBS MAIL system. The notification will indicate the type of bulletin board software used by the new BBS.

4.10   DEFINITIONS

BBS System Manager   EPA employee legally responsible for management of an Agency
                            BBS as described under Section 4.1. A contractor may not be a
                            BBS system manager.

BBS System Operator   EPA or contractor technical support employee who provides day-
                            to-day BBS operational, troubleshooting, and user support. The
                            BBS system manager may be the BBS system operator.

**Technology /
Management Issues**

Public Access

Jerry Slaymaker, Environmental Protection Agency

The 20th century is living up to its billing as the information age. Literally terabytes of data are being collected, stored, and utilized throughout the country. A lion's share of this data is being collected and stored by the United States Government.

As both the general public and legislative bodies are becoming more computer literate, a new public policy is emerging. This policy is based on the idea that any data that is collected utilizing public money belongs to the public and appropriate considerations must be made for providing access to that data to the taxpayers.

Public access to government data appears to be based on a very sound principle - that the public has an inalienable right to the data that affects its lives and livelihood.

Jerry Slaymaker has over 21 years of experience in federal data processing and is presently Deputy Director of the National Data Processing Division of the Environmental Protection Agency. He is also a member of the CFDCD Board of the Directors.

An obvious problem exists. Beyond a general concept, public access has never been adequately defined in practical implementation objectives for government departments and agencies. However, even without a specific definition, there appears to be four characteristics of public access as described in current public policy.

• Public access must allow for the unrestricted search and retrieval of all data collected and stored by the federal government (within the limits of national security and confidentiality.

• Data accessed by the public must be intuitively useful by the general public.

• Public access should be cost effective, which means the cost of providing the data should not be prohibitive to participating federal agencies or the public.

• A consistent model for public access should be used by all agencies of the federal government.
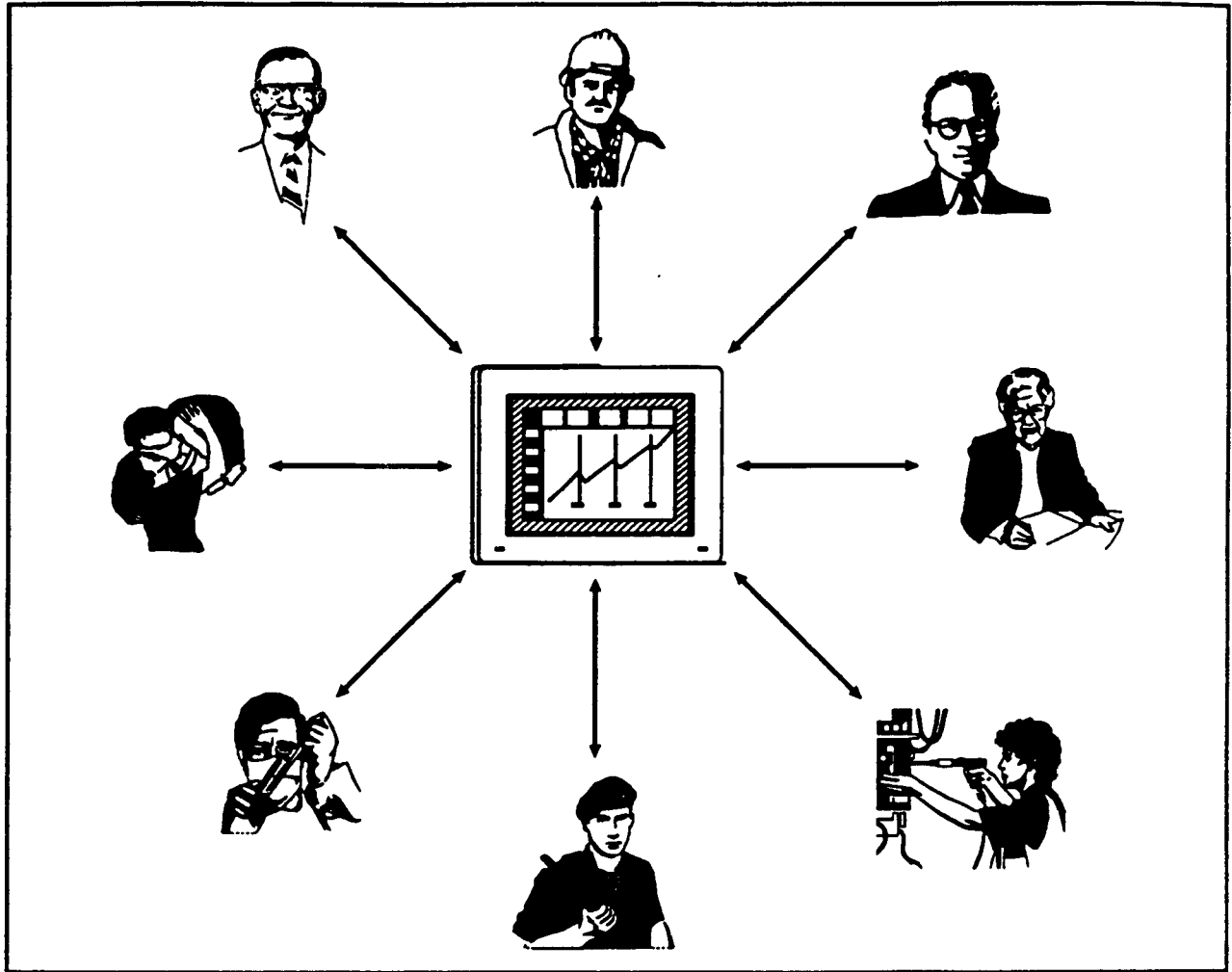
Although contradictory and difficult to implement, these characteristics capture the essence of the emerging public policy. It is clear that absolute adherence to these objectives will be difficult. Nevertheless, the data center director must respond positively to the concept of public access (in spite of the fact that public information is stored in a variety of media, utilizing a variety of database technologies). The fact is that the vast majority of these systems are too immature for even the owner to access the data with 100% confidence, due to either the lack of system sophistication or inadequate data quality.

Core Information

For the practical-minded data center director, the real challenge of public access will be to develop a clear set of expectations for your total enterprise. The major risk borne by the data center is that technology can easily be perceived as the panacea for public data access. In fact, public access will only be successful if both the data center and the enterprise as a whole understand the infrastructure which must be in place to support general public access.

The remainder of this paper proposes that this public access preparedness begins with the development of a public access assessment through which both the data center and the larger organization can determine who will

provide and support public access and what investments will have to be made in order to be successful. It cannot be overemphasized that it is in the best interest of the data center director to initiate this assessment. Otherwise, it will be assumed that all the technical and support resources already exist within the data center to support public access. The trick is to convince your management that the public access assessment is also in their best interest. Hopefully, what follows will be helpful in building your case.

As you undertake to initiate your enterprise-wide public access assessment, it should be remembered that the purpose of the exercise is educational as well as tactical. That is, the assessment will be identifying for senior management the scope of the impact to the organizations infrastructure as well as determining the best course to prepare for that impact. Although the data center may be the group to raise the consciousness of the enterprise on issues associated with public access, it certainly should not be the owner of public access for the whole organization.

Public access, in order to be successful, must be a program of its own within the organization - not just at the data center. As the public accesses information within the context of the total organization, the total organization must be prepared to provide the support necessary to make the information meaningful to the public. This notion has major support resource implications.

Public Access Assessment (PAA)

Although the ultimate public access assessment must be addressed by the total organization, what follows are some technical, billing, security and support issues which are of specific interest to the data center director.

Technology

Assuming that the public will want to access your mainframe directly, the data center must develop a set of guidelines on the type of interface it will be prepared to accept. Since the impetus for much of this policy is the advent of *personal computers*, the data center must address which types of PCs can access the data center. If the data center cannot provide access to any PC, a statement of requirement and associated costs should be developed to prepare it to do so.

Providing the next link in public access requires addressing *telecommunications connectivity*. Once the public access terminal types have been defined, the modem types need to be addressed. From the data center perspective, modem pooling must be available. Developing a modem pool means the data center must estimate the amount of telecommunications traffic. Decisions must also be made on whether the telecommunications costs will be billed or absorbed by the data center.

Once telecommunications connectivity has been established, the data center must deal with *mainframe log-in procedures*. The average user of the mainframe is familiar and comfortable with the log-in process. This will not be true for the public. There must be a mechanism within the log-in process that "shunts" the public customer to a smoother entry point. This mechanism should also point the public customer to the set of functions that can be performed. There probably needs to be a context-sensitive help function available. For the first time, the data center might have to consider the use of menus for selecting public access activities. The plan for assisting the public in logging into the mainframe must be included in the PAA.

At the point in the access process where the public meets the applications, most data centers can now step aside and let the buyer beware. Unfortunately, unless the proper *support infrastructure* has been developed and

identified to the public, it is the data center director who will be personally dealing with the public. Later, under the support section of the PAA, this matter is discussed.

It can be assumed that a public session might require printing of one or more documents that the initiator will want delivered. This issue must be considered by the data center. Even in data centers where all output is printed remotely, there may be a need for developing printing capability and a process by which output can be identified and mailed/delivered to any point from which the public has accessed the data center.

It is also possible that an individual might, by conscious thought or by accident, initiate a large volume data "dump" to their terminal. The data center needs to be prepared for this eventuality and either carefully abort the request (these folks know their congressman better then they know you) or be prepared for a long data transmission session through the 1200/2400 baud modem pool. A procedure needs to be endorsed by management for handling this requirement and should be part of the PAA.

Once a customer has initiated a few public sessions, they will probably heighten their expectations for continued access. In other words, familiarity will breed contempt, and the data center will need to recognize this possibility and anticipate the need for introducing an expert mode to any dialogue session normally used for public access.

Charge-back

Because current Freedom of Information legislation allows departments to charge for obtaining and reproducing requested material, it follows that the same will be true for public access. The requirement to charge the public for access will not be a trivial matter for the data center. It will require the development of both CPU and telecommunication rates. It will require the ability to provide estimates to the public for specific inquiries. It will require a

billing mechanism - invoicing. It will require monitoring and collection notices if the public is non-responsive. It will involve the sensitive issue of barring further access to a member of the public for failure to pay.

These are thorny issues that will require the data center director to obtain clear guidance from senior management. Recommended guidance and a request for management approval should be included in the PAA. A data center director must be sensitive to the public perception generated through implementing any of these policies. It is important to have the support of Agency policy and senior management whenever public access might be withheld.

Security

Some security issues are implied in the mainframe log-in process, but this section should specifically address a risk assessment imbedded within the PAA.

The risk assessment should address controls required to prevent any unauthorized use of the computing resources. For most data centers that have had to implement data security procedures, this will be a major issue. The security risk of providing direct access to the mainframe should address safe guards required to:

- insure the public access is limited to specific applications and/or specific files or data bases,

- insure that the application cannot terminate/abort, leaving the session open for non-authorized activity, and

- insure that the public session has no potential for discovering password lists, further compromising security.

Public access is an open invitation for "hacking," but the policy will not allow denial of all public

access because of this threat. The data center must use the PAA to show the potential threats and solutions.

Support

At this point the PAA must focus on the infrastructure required in other parts of the enterprise. Unless specifically addressed within the PAA, the implementation of public access might be considered to rest solely within technology. It is vital that the data center provide some guidance/education to those who will be caught up in the implementation of a public access program.

One fundamental requirement that is often overlooked in implementing public access is the notification to the public that access is available. There must be a process by which the public is given an inventory of information available and, at a minimum, instructions on how to begin the process and who to call for further information. Technical information concerning terminal types, modem types, and sign-on protocols should also be included. This collection of information, a *"public access starter kit,"* must involve the owners, collectors, and analyzers of the information to be made public. This kit needs to be developed and distributed prior to any public access program. How it is to be developed, distributed, and updated needs to be addressed.

A *programmatic support staff* will need to be identified. The staff will perform a variety of functions, including helping customers identify specific data of interest, structure inquiries, provide interpretations if needed, provide follow-up, insure customer satisfaction, and serve as an ombudsman between the customer and the manager of each data system.

Finally, a clear *escalation procedure* needs to be developed as part of the PAA. This procedure should identify conditions under which requests and complaints are to be escalated, the timing of this escalation, the timing for any response to the customer in cases

of escalation, the authority vested in someone to address potentially sensitive issues, and a regular reporting mechanism to management on issues requiring escalation.

Alternative Technologies

The PAA from the data center perspective should address for management any alternatives that might help mitigate the difficulties of public access. Any alternative should address a specific problem area and cost, as well as the organizational impact.

One obvious alternative to direct access to the mainframe data bases is access to text in the form of data reports and publications that are made available on demand to public requests. This alternative would support people who could not afford the equipment necessary for direct data access. An emerging technology to support this alternative is audio text, which allows the customer to call a number and through a series of questions and tone responses identify documents of interest. These documents can then be automatically faxed to a telephone number entered by the customer or mailed to an address that the customer records at the appropriate prompt. Several systems with this or similar functionality are in use today by public organizations.

Another emerging technology is CD-ROM, which allows the distribution of static information on relatively inexpensive compact disks. Once the master disk is developed, reproduction costs are low. The CD-ROM disks are easy to handle, hard to damage, and could be available to be mailed on request. It should be noted, however, that recent implementation of this technology has received negative reviews ("cold" and "unresponsive") from those considering it.

Along with the emergence of the popularity of personal computers, the introduction and expansion of service bureaus that provide information on-line has burgeoned in the past few years. These service bureaus have built

the infrastructure to provide support and chargeback for general public access to information. An agency could provide the data to these bureaus, who would in turn make it available to the public and recover costs via user fees. This alternative would significantly reduce the impact of public access on the data center director who would only have to provide data to a single service bureau. All telecommunications, support infrastructure, and user fees would be administered by the service bureau with these functions already in place.

Recommendation

Each data center director should initiate a dialogue with senior management to determine the interest in public access. During the course of this dialogue, the data center director should remind management of emerging public policy on public access. If it is determined that there may be some interest or a future requirement, the data center director should follow the guidance included in this paper and initiate a Public Access Assessment.

The issue of public access is easy to understand, so it is a natural candidate for public debate. Public access will not go away, and it will be difficult to implement. The burden will be on the data center, and the sooner relevant issues are raised the better the chance of agency support and success.

Appendix

One Proposal for Public Access through Public Libraries

This proposal is provided for information only and documents one possible government-wide solution for public access.

This proposal recommends that the federal government define strategically the model for public access as being the access of government data through the public library system. This model means that each department would provide tabulations, analyses, and graphical presentations that show all relevant material through CD-ROM, which would be distributed to each of the county public libraries in the United States on an appropriate schedule.

Furthermore, any limited hardcopy publications could be distributed in the same manner. Where on-line interactive access to any of the government's databases is required, telecommunications circuits could be provided to the Depository Library network only. Citizens requiring this type of access would travel to the nearest Depository Library to make this type of retrieval.

It is believed that this model could actually be endorsed by Congress through the introduction of specific legislation that would capitalize the investment to provide the CD-ROM reading equipment and interactive terminals. The legislation would require each agency and department to submit to an oversight agency (possibly the Library of Congress) a plan and schedule for the implementation of this model. In the meantime, the Library of Congress would oversee the distribution of the necessary equipment to support public access and to identify these positions as positions for handicapped citizens.

This model would provide several attractive characteristics.

- **Defines a tactical implementation of public access.** Each department and agency could be held accountable for producing information to be distributed through or accessed by the public library system.

- **Eliminates the technical discussions concerning wide-range telecommunications access to government databases.** This reduces the costs and makes the model achievable in a shorter timeframe.

- **Focuses attention on an existing infrastructure.** Everyone knows where the public libraries are located and how to get information out of them.

- **Puts the interface with the public and with reference material in the hands of people who are trained to do the work** – public librarians and their staffs. These people are used to working with the public and would require no additional training.

- **Aids the public library system through the introduction of new technology (CD-ROM)** for an existing function (repository for federal government public information).

- **Would not stress the overburdened public library facility** because the information would be distributed through terminals requiring less space than hardcopy material.

- **Creates a viable political solution to a potentially complex issue** by providing public access through public libraries.

NATIONAL WATER CLEARINGHOUSE QUESTIONNAIRES

BREAKOUT GROUP QUESTIONS

CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

GROUP 1

Identification of Users and Their Needs

1. Within your organization, who would be the principal users of the Clearinghouse? (Rank in order of usage)

   ____Technical
   ____Policy/Decisionmakers
   ____Non-Technical
   ____Other

2. How would these groups access the Clearinghouse? (Rank in order of usage)

   ____Phone
   ____Mail
   ____Computer
   ____Other

3. What type of products would your users require? (Rank in order)

   ____Reports
   ____Data - Electronic/Hard copy
   ____Referrals

4. Would your users want an 800 (toll-free) telephone number to call the Clearinghouse for information?

5. What data, information and services would your organization be able to provide the Clearinghouse?

   ____Computer databases
   ____Water resource information and data files
   ____Access to other agency/organization data (i.e., sharing of existing data or cooperative arrangements or agreements)

   Other sources of data/information that could be accessible to the Clearinghouse?

6. Could your agency/organization expect to serve as a local information center? How and to what extent could your organization supply answers to public inquiries?

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

GROUP 1

Identification of Users and Their Needs

1. Based on your experience, who would be the principal users of the Clearinghouse? (e.g., technical, policy/decisionmakers, non-technical/public)

2. What **access options** should be made available to Clearinghouse users? (e.g., phone, mail, computer interface)

3. What **type of products** should be made available to Clearinghouse users? (e.g., reports, general fact sheets, data - electronic/hard copy)

4. Would your users want an 800 (toll-free) telephone number to call the Clearinghouse for information?

5. What data, information and services would your organization be able to provide the Clearinghouse? (please check the appropriate item(s))

   ____ Computer databases
   ____ Water resource information and data files
   ____ Access to other agency/organization data (i.e., sharing of existing data or cooperative arrangements or agreements)
   ____ GIS-based information

   Other sources of data/information that could be accessible to the Clearinghouse?

6. Might your agency/organization be interested in serving as a local information center? How and to what extent does your organization currently supply answers to public inquiries?

CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA AND KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

GROUP 2

Data and Information Issues

1. What are the major issues/problems of compatibility between the Clearinghouse and collectors of data/information? How may these problems be resolved? What first steps can be taken toward implementation of data/information sharing/access?

2. How shall the Clearinghouse gain access to other agency data systems to allow downloading of data to respond to requests?

3. From a user perspective, what form of data would be most useful to your organization - electronic or hard copy (floppy, CD-ROM)?

4. Should the Clearinghouse establish standards to assure compatibility and quality control of data? What should those standards be? Please define.

CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA AND KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

GROUP 3

The Structure, Function and Services of a Clearinghouse

1. Would you want the Clearinghouse to operate as a referral center or as a one-stop response center?

2. Would you want the Clearinghouse to be centralized or decentralized, i.e., local contacts or one national contact?

3. Should an interagency committee be formed (Federal, State, Private) to coordinate the operation of the Clearinghouse?

4. How should the Clearinghouse obtain data/information from other agencies, and should the Clearinghouse validate the quality of such information?

5. What services should the Clearinghouse provide?

6. Should a fee structure be included for Clearinghouse services?

MAK 28 1991

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Printing Control Officer Dissemination Role

FROM: Charles L. Grizzle
           Assistant Administrator

TO: Assistant Administrators
           Associate Administrators
           Regional Administrators
   Inspector General
           General Counsel

   Inadequate access to EPA publications is currently a
source of frustration to Agency staff and the public.   EPA
does not utilize existing mechanisms to provide access to
Agency published information.   Better access to EPA
publications will assure full benefit of the significant
resources invested in collecting, developing, analyzing and
publishing information.

   We have recently been notified by the U.S. Joint
Committee on Printing that we are in violation of regulations
that require Federal publications to be accessible through
the Federal Depository Library system.   This system of 1400
libraries throughout the U.S. is a primary means of making
environmental information available to the public.   The
Government Printing Office (GPO) produces the appropriate
number of publication copies at no cost to the Agency.

   Recent analysis of EPA publications in our own Agency
network of 28 libraries reveals that many EPA publications
are not even available to Agency staff through our libraries.
It is unconscionable to develop publications without assuring
they will be made available to other EPA staff through our
library network.

It is the responsibility of your Printing Control Officer to assure that GPO receives two copies of each publication for the Depository Library System, and that the local EPA library receives two copies. If you have any questions about procedures for GPO, please contact James Anderson, Agency Printing Officer, at 8-382-2125. If you have any other questions about access to EPA publications, please contact Brigid Rapp, Chief, Information Access Branch, at 8-475-8710.

cc: Administrative Council Members
    Senior Information Resource Management Officials
    EPA Publications Taskforce
    Printing Control Officers
    EPA Librarians
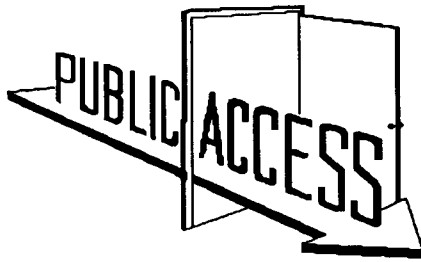
APPENDIX B:

Contacts

This appendix contains a list of individuals within EPA that can be contacted for further information on the various topics covered in this document. Also *Access EPA* should be consulted for comprehensive lists of access point and distribution mechanism contacts.

In this appendix, personal names of contacts are included for convenient access. However, name changes are much more frequent than office changes. Therefore, at the end of each section of this Guide, only office names are listed.

Clearinghouses

Susan Dolgin, Indoor Air Clearinghouse, (202) 233-9048, 8-202-233-9048 (FTS)

Emma McNamara at (202) 260-3522, 8-202-260-3522 (FTS) on INFOTERRA

Lois Ramponi (contractor) EPA Headquarters Library, (202) 260-5922, 8-260-5922 (FTS)

Bonnie Smith at (215) 597-9076, 8-215-597-9076 (FTS) Region 3, Center for Environmental Learning

Databases

Vandiver Bradow, Telecommunications Branch, OARM, RTP (919) 541-3574, 8-919-541-3574 (FTS)

Jonda Byrd at (513) 569-7183, 8-513-569-7183 (FTS) or John Knight at (919) 541-2794, 8-919-541-2794 (FTS) for information on the Online Library System

Steve Newburg-Rinn, Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Toxic Release Inventory System (202) 260-3757, 8-202-260-3757 (FTS)

Jerry Slaymaker, National Data Processing Division, OARM, RTP (919) 541-3483, 8-919-541-3483 (FTS)

Jack Sweeney at (404) 347-2316, 8-404-347-2316 (FTS) for information on the Region 4 public access database project

Dockets

Gloris Butler, Docket Coordinator, Information Management and Services Division, OIRM, (202) 260-3639, 8-202-260-3639 (FTS)

EPA Distribution Mechanisms

Jonda Byrd, OIRM, Cincinnati - Federal Depository Library Program, (513) 569-7183, 8-513-569-7183 (FTS)

Earl Eastwood, EPIC, (513) 569-7980, 8-513-569-7980 (FTS)

Calvin Lawrence, CERI, (513) 569-7391, 8-513-569-7391 (FTS)

Deborah McNealley, EPIC, (513) 569-7980, 8-513-569-7980 (FTS)

Renee Nicholas, Region 10 Public Information Center, (206) 553-4973, 8-206-553-4973 (FTS)

Brigid Rapp, OIRM, Information Access Branch, Headquarters Public Information Center, (202) 260-8710, 8-202-260-8710 (FTS)

Dennis Wagner, ORD, (202) 260-9617, 8-202-260-9617 (FTS)

Electronic Bulletin Boards

Vandiver Bradow, Telecommunications Branch, OARM, RTP, (919) 541-3574, 8-919-541-3574 (FTS)

Denis Lussier (513) 569-7354, 8-513-569-7354 (FTS)

Myles Morse, ORD, Pollution Information Exchange System, (202) 260-5748, 8-202-260-5748 (FTS)

Electronic Products

Gerry Brown, Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Toxic Release Inventory - diskettes, tapes, CD ROMs, (202) 260-7248, 8-202-260-7248 (FTS)

Tom Clemmer, Office of Administration and Resources Management, National Data Processing Division, RTP, NC - CD ROMs, (919) 541-1057, 8-919-541-1057 (FTS)

Anne Pope, Office of Administration and Resources Management, National Data Processing Division, RTP, NC - CD ROM pilot project, (919) 541-5373, 8-919-541-5373 (FTS)

External Survey

Jan Erickson, Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics is contacting external parties as a component of developing an outreach strategy for TRI, (202) 260-9389, 8-202-260-9389 (FTS)

Dave Schwarz, Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation can provide information on OMB Information Collection regulations, (202) 260-2706, 8-202-260-2706 (FTS)

FOIA Examination

Mike Mundell in the Office of Water should be contacted for further information on PCS study, (202) 260-8324, 8-202-260-8324 (FTS).

Federal Government Sponsored Distribution Mechanisms

James Anderson, EPA/GPO Liaison, (202) 260-2125, 8-202-260-2125 (FTS)

Tom Bold, NTIS (703) 487-4785, 8-703-487-4785 (FTS)

Paula Moser, CIC/EPA Agency Liaison, (202) 501-1794, 8-202-501-1794 (FTS)

Hotlines

Pat Bonner at (206) 553-8509, 8-206-553-8509 (FTS) for information on the Region 10 hotline.

Barbara Roth, RCRA/Superfund Hotline, (202) 260-4646, 8-202-260-4646 (FTS)

Libraries

James Anderson, Agency Printing Officer, (202) 260-2125, 8-202-260-2125 (FTS)

Gerry Brown, Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Toxics Release Inventory, (202) 260-7248, 8-202-260-7248 (FTS)

Jonda Byrd, OIRM, Cincinnati, (513) 569-7183, 8-513-569-7183 (FTS)

Multimedia Products

Robert W. Cibulskis, Environmental Response Branch, Emergency Response Division, OSWER, (908) 321-6746, 8-908-321-6746

Maggie Rea, Environmental Research Laboratory, Corvallis, Oregon, Office of Research and Development - Video production on laboratory activities, (503) 757-4601, 8-503-757-4601 (FTS)

Charlene Shaw, Communication Strategist, Office of Water - Slide shows, (202) 260-2285, 8-202-260-2285 (FTS)

Michael Torrusio, Acting Director, Multimedia Services, OCEPA, (202) 260-2053, 8-202-260-2053 (FTS)

Partnership Opportunities

Wendy Butler, OCEPA, (202) 260-4355, 8-202-260-4355 (FTS)

Paula Moser, GSA's Consumer Information Center, EPA Agency Liaison, (202) 501-1794, 8-202-501-1794 (FTS)

Region 10 Hotline for Region 10 States, 1-800-424-4EPA

Ruth Robenalt, OCEPA, (202) 260-1380, 8-202-260-1380 (FTS)

Charlene Shaw, Office of Water, (202) 260-2285, 8-260-2285 (FTS)

Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals in Business, (703) 519-3700

Supermarket Communication System (203) 852-0888

Arty Williams, Office of Pesticide Programs, (703) 305-7371, 8-365-7371 (FTS)

Product Evaluation Cards

    Paula Moser, GSA's Consumer Information Center, EPA Agency
    Liaison, (202) 501-1794, 8-202-501-1794 (FTS)

Public Information Centers (PICs)

    Pat Bonner, Region 10, Office of Public Affairs (206) 553-1107, 8-206-553-
    1107 (FTS)

    Brigid Rapp, OIRM, Information Access Branch, Headquarters Public
    Information Center, (202) 260-8710, 8-202-260-8710 (FTS)

Public Information Materials

    John Knight, EPA National Computer Center, RTP, NC - Online
    Library System pilot project, (919) 541-2794, 8-919-541-2794 (FTS)

    Dwight Rodgers, Telecommunications Manager, Office of
    Administration and Resources Management - Telephone directories,
    (202) 260-2082, 8-202-260-2082 (FTS)

    Jeff Sabol, Information Management Branch, OIRM - Information
    System Inventory, (202) 260-8974, 8-202-260-8974 (FTS)

Publications

    Miles Allen, OCEPA - Deputy Director, Editorial Services, (202) 260-
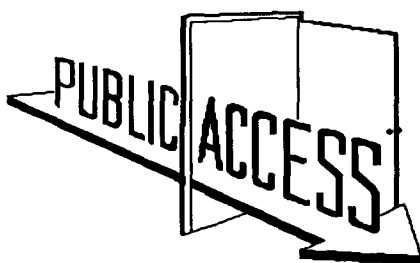   6642, 8-202-260-6642 (FTS)

    Kym Burke, OCEPA - *EPA InSight* Editor, (202) 260-0336, 8-202-260-0336
    (FTS)

    Earl Eastwood, EPA Publications and Information Center, Cincinnati -
    Agency numbering system, (513) 569-7980, 8- 513-569-7980 (FTS)

    John Heritage, OCEPA - *EPA Journal*, Editor (202) 260-4393, 8-202-260-
    4393 (FTS)

    Charlie Osolin, OCEPA - Director, Editorial Services, (202) 260-4359, 8-
   202-260-4359 (FTS)

APPENDIX C:

Acronyms

ACRONYM LIST

AIR CHIEF	Clearinghouse for Inventories and Emission Factors
ASTHO	Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
CD ROM	Compact Disk Read Only Memory
CERI	Center for Environmental Research
CIC	Consumer Information Center
DTFW	Difficult to Filter Wastes
EPIC	EPA Publications and Information Center
FDIC	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
FIFRA	Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act
FIRMR	Federal Information Resources Management Regulation
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GPO	Government Printing Office
GSA	Government Services Administration
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
ICPIC	International Cleaner Production Information Computer System
IMSD	Information Management Services Division
IRMD	Information Resources Management Division
ISI	Information Systems Inventory
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NASDA	National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
NDPD	National Data Processing Division
NLM	National Library of Medicine
NPL	National Priorities List
NSDD	National Security Decision Directive
NTIS	National Technical Information Services
OARM	Office of Administration and Resources Management
OCEPA	Office of Communications, Education, and Public Affairs
OCLC	Online Computer Library Center
OERR	Office of Emergency and Remedial Response

OIRM	Office of Information Resources Management
OLS	Online Library System
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OPPE	Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation
OPPT	Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics
ORD	Office of Research and Development
OSWER	Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response
PCS	Permit Compliance System
PIC	Public Information Center
PIES	Pollution Information Exchange System
PPIC	Pollution Prevention Information Clearinghouse
RCB	Releases Control Branch
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
RCRIS	Resource Conservation and Recovery Information System
RREL	Risk Reduction Engineering Laboratory
RTP	Research Triangle Park, NC
SFIREG	State FIFRA Issues Research and Evaluation Group
SITE	Superfund Innovative Technology Evaluation
SOCAP	Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals in Business
T&D	Typography and Design Division
TCLP	Toxicity Characteristic Leaching Procedure
TRI	Toxic Release Inventory
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
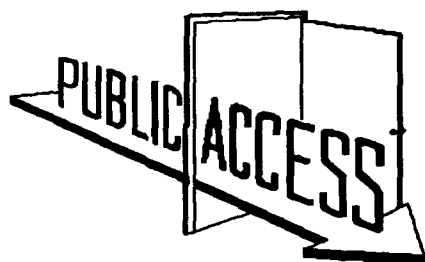
APPENDIX D:

Comment Form

PUBLIC ACCESS: A "HOW TO GUIDE"
UPDATE AND COMMENT FORM

Submitted by:	Date:
EPA Office/Division:	
Address:	Phone:

I. UPDATE INFORMATION

New Entry:_____
Revision: _____   Page Number:_____

Description of information to be updated or added:

II. IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PUBLIC ACCESS MANUAL

Please provide comments below which indicate areas that need improvement or additional topics which should be covered:

How often do you use the manual?

When or why do you use the manual?

Do you find the manual to be a helpful reference tool?

Internal Use Only: Date Received_____

Please return this form to: Brigid Rapp, Chief, Information Access Branch, PM-211D