



EPA DATA TALK

Vol. 1

March 1978

No. 1

The first of several changes in the Management Information and Data Systems Division is the way Mr. Willis Greenstreet describes the "New Look" of EPA Data Talk (formerly EPA Systems News). The reorientation of the format is only the cosmetics of the "New Look"; more important is the formalization of its purpose. EPA Data Talk will be published monthly by the National Computer Center, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, for the purpose of providing a report on the automatic data processing activities of the Environmental Protection Agency and other personnel involved in the protection of the environment.

Information provided is intended to be news articles of general interest in specific areas of automatic data processing in EPA. It is not intended to report detailed technical information. Highly technical articles and information, such as "people to contact" by subject area, which you have been used to in the past, will be periodically published as a supplement to EPA Data Talk. Views expressed by authors will not necessarily reflect EPA policy.

The following people have agreed to serve as "Coordinating Editors" for the subject areas indicated:

<u>Subject Area</u>	<u>Coordinating Editor</u>
Director's Corner	Willis Greenstreet
Lead Article	Rotated Among Editors
Management Information	
Data Systems Division	Ken Byram
Washington Computer Center	Ken Byram
National Computer Center	Sam Brown
Minicomputers	Ed Nime
Training	Maureen Johnson
Telecommunications	Fred Kastner
Regional Offices	Ted Standish

THE NEW LOOK

by **Sam Brown**
DIRECTOR
NATIONAL COMPUTER CENTER

The above contributors may author articles themselves or request other personnel to write them. All areas may not be reported on this month since this is reorientation time, but, hopefully, all
(Cont. Pg. 2)

DIRECTOR'S CORNER



Willis Greenstreet

I hope that the title of this column is not a Freudian slip, but it does seem familiar. I think that the revamping of the format of this newsletter is the first of many changes in MIDSD. I have said that my job is to manage change and, as you can easily tell, it is a difficult task.

I have selected Sam Brown to be the Project Manager for the A-109 procurement for the 1980's data center and he is in the process of organizing and finding out what he has to do. I will leave it to him to describe how he plans to handle his dual role and everyone's interest in this extremely important activity. Among the many attributes that Sam Brown brings to this job is one which was almost overwhelming in my judgment. Whatever he buys, he has to make work.

As many of you know, I have sponsored two seminars for managers without an ADP background on Data Base Management Systems in recent months. These seminars were an attempt to place DBMS in perspective and give the managers some idea of how to ask the right questions. I was pleased with the level of attendees, the number who took time to attend, and the reception the seminars received. We had a heavily technical course in December in which many of you were offered spaces and, from all reports, this was an excellent course. Unfortunately, some of the slots were not utilized. I strongly encourage everyone in EPA to prepare themselves to participate in design, programming, and operation of DBMS. I hasten to add that DBMS will not totally replace conventional methods of access, but it will be used more as we become better able to manage this technology.

I have transferred the ADP training function to NCC under the direction of Sam Brown. Vic Cohen is in the process of being reassigned at this time and will relocate in early summer. I believe that the consolidation of the talents and interests will be beneficial to you and the rest of the user community.

THE NEW LOOK (Cont. fm Pg. 1)

Coordinating Editors will have their articles submitted in a timely manner beginning with the April issue. Articles in other categories will be considered for publication. Contributions and inquiries should be addressed to:

Editor, EPA Data Talk
National Computer Center
Research Triangle Park
North Carolina 27711

The publication staff at NCC has developed the publishing policy. The policy specifies that the publication staff reserves the right to edit articles for readability or to fit available layout space. Authors are requested to minimize use of acronyms and concentrate on preparing articles for a general audience, not "ADP Techs". No permission will be necessary to reproduce the contents except copyright photos and materials so indicated. Information presented should be as current as possible.

We in the ADP Community have reason to be proud of the important part we have played in assuring that the nation obtains and maintains a compatible balance between human activities and the ability of natural systems to support and nurture life. These efforts need to be published via EPA Data Talk. As important as our role has been in the past, it will be even more important in the future. A series of events over the past couple of years, initiated by new legislation, is revising the EPA process to the point where "health effects" will play an even more critical part of the overall effort.

The FY1979 budget assures that the EPA mission will emphasize heavily the health effects area. This mandatory impact of health effects on the overall

EPA process will place a heavy emphasis on the expertise and capabilities of the ADP community. There is no doubt that we can meet this challenge, but the results that go into it should be publicized. Your contribution to the appropriate Coordinating Editor is appreciated. The NCC publication staff will dedicate itself to the accurate, objective, and timely publication of the "New Look" of EPA Data Talk.

IMPROVEMENTS FORESEEN IN NATIONAL NETWORK

F. Kastner
Computer Specialist

The National Network is a series of communications lines over which computer-related data is exchanged. The data exchanges take place between EPA user sites and central site computers located at the National Computer Center (NCC) in Research Triangle Park and the Washington Computer Center (WCC) in Washington, D.C.

Over the past several months, increased emphasis has been placed on improving overall network stability and reliability. The telecommunications segment of the COMNET contract received a very low grade during the last contract monitoring period reflecting the instability and general user dissatisfaction with accessing WCC and NCC. As a result of this low grade, and as a result of increased pressure from the users and MIDSD, COMNET is taking steps to remedy the situation. Recent meetings between COMNET and AT&T have identified several actions to be taken as follows:

- Some chronic circuit problems have been resolved.
- Wideband (High-volume) circuits connecting WCC to NCC and Denver to NCC should be operational during February 1978 and provide improved data transmission reliability.

- To improve hardware reliability, COMNET has negotiated a maintenance contract with the multiplexer supplier (TIMEPLEX). Motivation for the new maintenance contract is improved response to requests for repair service and for supply of backup components until repair is effected.
- Trouble reports received from remote sites, such as Grosse Ile, Michigan, Florida, and Boston, have initiated action to reconfigure network data transmission paths for more direct routing and efficient problem diagnosis.

COMNET is continuing to test software to allow Univac 1004 remote equipment and other NTR emulator equipment to access the NCC over the National Network.

COMNET continues to strive for excellence in development of the very complex National Network. Improvements have been in evidence and efforts to provide EPA users with the support they deserve will continue. The EPA Data Talk will attempt to keep you informed on developments of this vital resource.

PRODUCTION CONTROL SERVICES NOW AVAILABLE AT NCC

E. Watson
Computer Specialist

The NCC Mission Contractor is happy to announce that a Production Control function has been established within the NCC User Services Support Department. The role of the Production Control function is to submit, monitor, and ensure successful completion of computer runs. These computer runs are those required by a user on a periodic, timely basis such as data base updates or reports which are required as a result of a data base update.

The Production Control function will process requests for service that are required on a fixed schedule, e.g., the

third working Wednesday of every month, the last day of every month, or every other Friday. Recurring tasks that cannot be scheduled on fixed days or dates are acceptable, however, the timeliness of the output cannot be guaranteed.

Whether or not a job stands alone or is one of a series of runs within a system, it will be well-documented with step-by-step procedures at the time the run is assumed by the Production Control function.

Presently, there are three activities conducted by Production Control: the monthly update of the Personal Property System, updating and report generation for the Gas Cylinder System, and Regional Office assistance.

Production Control services are offered to free the user from the aggravation of job monitoring and run resubmission. Production Control will maintain a stable staff of knowledgeable employees who will provide timely, expeditious processing services. We believe that the Production Control staff operating under established standards and procedures will provide a highly cost-effective service. Anyone interested in further information on these services should contact Ernie Watson of EPA/NCC (919-541-2143/FTS 629-2143) or Jim Smith of SDC ISI (919-541-3619/FTS 629-3619).

AGENCY ADP TRAINING MOVES TO RTP

Maureen Johnson
Computer Specialist

Administration of the EPA National Training Program has been transferred to Research Triangle Park. The objective of this newly constituted program will be to identify agency-wide ADP training requirements and provide for excellence in instruction and course content. In addition to administering a continuing program of currently available courses, new courses will be developed with the objective of individual career development.

Delores Moorman and John Hart of CCSD/Cincinnati met with Gene Lowrimore, Vic Cohen, and Maureen Johnson of NCC/RTP in early February to identify courses to be developed and presented during FY1978 and FY1979. The course selections were consistent with recommendations contained in the "Coordinated ADP Training Plan" completed by HUMRRO in September 1976.

During the remainder of FY1978, course offerings will include an introduction to ADP Concepts, Project Management and an Executive Management Seminar. Course location sites will include the western and mid-western areas. Specific course descriptions and registration information will be forthcoming, so watch for details in the EPA Data Talk.

NEW MINICOMPUTER SYSTEMS SOFTWARE PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED

Ed Nime, Director
Computer Services & Systems Division

Two PDP11/70 systems software projects - an Automatic Telecommunications Processing System and a Generalized Tape Utility - were implemented recently. The design of the projects involved input from all five EPA PDP11/70 sites. The software was developed and is currently being tested at Cincinnati. Installation at other sites is scheduled for March 1978.

The Automatic Telecommunications Processing System was designed to:

- Relieve PDP11/70 operators from as much RJE-related work as possible.
- Maximize telecommunications throughput, minimize costs, and maximize reliability.
- Provide automatic dial-out and answer.
- Provide automatic PDP11 to PDP11 communications.

- Provide automatic PDP11 to Univac 1110 communication via the NTR emulator developed for EPA.
- Provide automatic PDP11 to Data General Nova Laboratory mini-computer communications.
- Perform accounting and provide daily user job status access.
- Provide optional concurrent manual operation of all emulators by the operator.

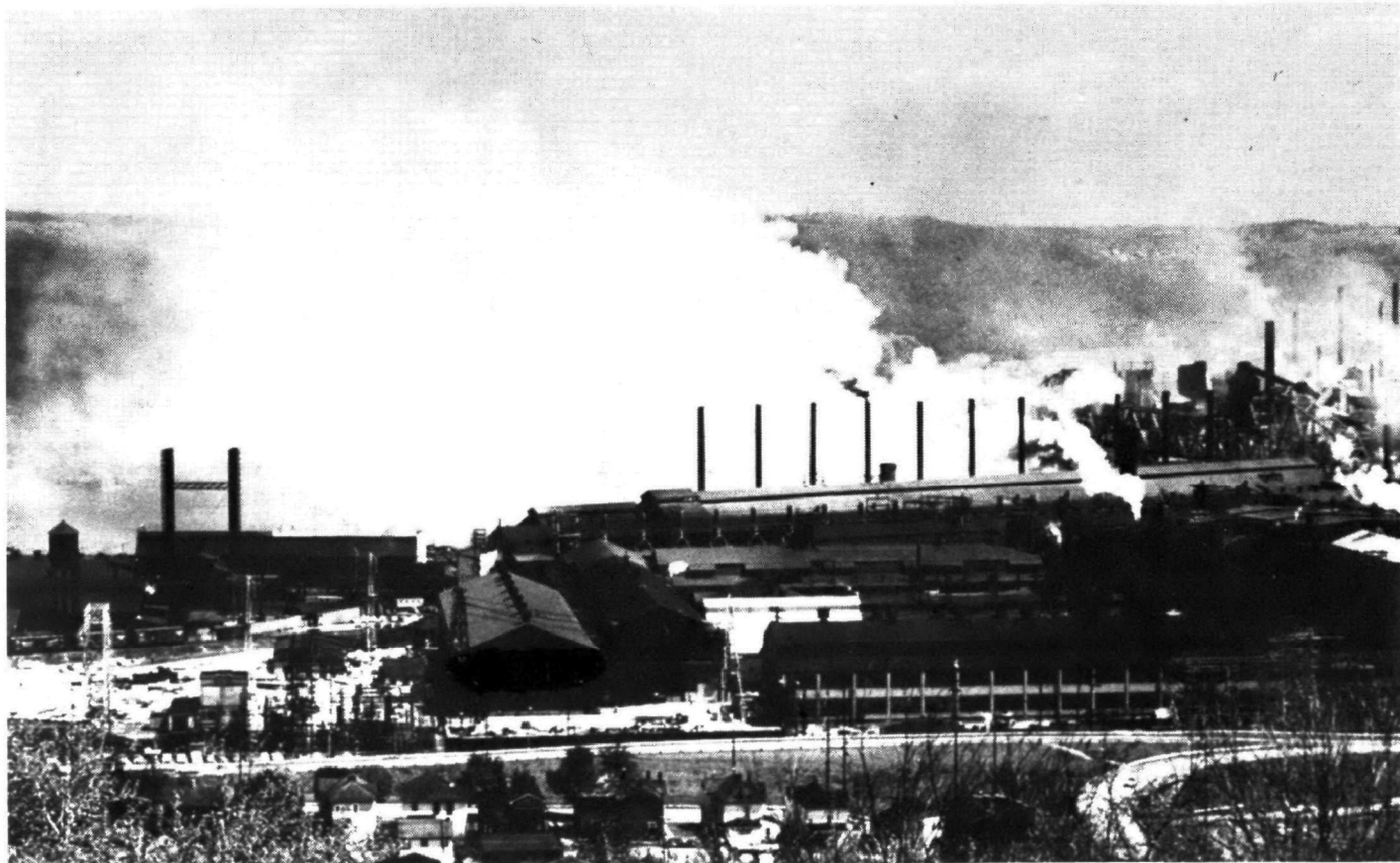
Accounting and job status access includes date/time files sent and received by each emulator, blocks sent and received for each file, error count during transmission/reception of each file, and host job name/number and job card accounting information.

All of the program objectives have been achieved with the exception of PDP11 to PDP11 communications, which is awaiting a module from DEC; NTR - Univac communications, which is awaiting a patched NTR availability on NCC; and DG Nova Communications, which is awaiting local completion of Nova code.

The General Tape Utility, which has been titled OBI for On-Line Block I/O, was originally designed to allow tapes produced on IBM 370's to be read on PDP11/-70's and vice versa. A number of other services have been added during development. The utility will read or write IBM standard-label or no-label tapes containing fixed length records, blocked or unblocked. It also provides a tape map facility for which the user only needs to supply the correct density. The tape map furnishes information on block size and block count for each file, as well as hexadecimal dump of the first three blocks. From this, the user can supply information needed to copy files from the tape. Print, translate, and dump capabilities are available as a part of the copy option. The utility may be run online or in batch.

A test version of OBI was distributed to three EPA sites in October 1977. The full version is nearing completion of the test phase and will be distributed as soon as documentation is completed.

A significant objective of the Air and Waste Management Office is the monitoring and control of stationary air emissions, particularly industrial plants.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM WCC

Ken Byram
Technical Operations Branch

WCC publishes its own newsletter, SIGNON, which is mailed to all registered users of the WCC. This monthly column is an attempt to highlight activities at WCC which might be of interest to the wider ADP community.

✓ A security audit, conducted by Computer Resource Control includes a risk analysis of vulnerabilities to EPA's considerable investment in data and data processing equipment. A draft report was delivered to EPA on February 3 and is undergoing EPA and COMNET review.

✓ Progress on meeting objectives set by the Performance Evaluation (Award Fee) Board has improved. Machine stability, highlighted by the board, went over 95 percent for the first entire month of January. Telecommunications network reliability seems more attainable based on a central AT&T contact for telephone line problems.

✓ User support training visits are scheduled for regions/labs in March or April. The format for the sessions will be selected by local ADP contacts.

✓ Documentation libraries are being established in major labs and regions. The intent is to maintain central sites where IBM and WCC documentation will be kept up-to-date.

✓ WCC User's Guides were distributed to registered users on February 1.

✓ Input ability to twin systems for Change Control and Problem Resolution was released to the user community in The February issue of SIGNON. Both systems provide tracking, work estimates, and originator reporting as problems or enhancements are suggested.

✓ The Systems Review Council met in February to review COMNET's schedule for implementing changes to the Operating System, the remote job entry system, and the low speed interface languages (OS, HASP, and ALPHA).

RATE CHANGES ANNOUNCED AT NCC AND WCC

Ken Byram

A rate increase for ADP users at the National Computer Center and the Washington Computer Center has been announced by Willis Greenstreet, Director of the Management Information and Data Systems Division. The rate change reflects a 12 percent increase (from \$160/SRU to \$180/SRU) for users of the NCC and a 23 percent increase for those of the WCC.

In his announcement of the increase, Mr. Greenstreet stated that there are currently sufficient funds available to pay the expenses for both centers. However, a study of current expenses and utilization of computer facilities have resulted in an overall cost increase at both sites.

Expenses of operating the centers consist of reimbursements to the WCC contractor, COMNET, for equipment rental, personnel, etc., and reimbursements to the NCC contractors, SDC ISI and Univac, for technical personnel and equipment.

The ADP fund is established by a zero-based budgeting exercise and the components which make up the total come from the user's decision packages. After total costs are determined, each user receives a suballowance in proportion to their packages. To charge against that suballowance, WCC and NCC have determined and published a "billing algorithm" or rate structure, which assigns a cost to each unit of use. At the end of the year, total costs are apportioned among the various users.

An accurate determination of unit costs is extremely difficult. For that reason, cost distribution determinations are made periodically and rates are set based upon current utilization figures. The most recent study has resulted in the present rate increases.

At NCC, the only charge the data center made was for processing resources, the cost of a system's resource unit. At the WCC, however, the center has stabilized and experience has been acquired in determining utilization and expenses. While charges for some units will decline, others will increase proportionally. More details are contained in the WCC Newsletter SIGNON.

All funding is for a one-year period. Estimates of charges for the first quarter will be refined and adjusted to adequately cover the full year's expenses. Fourth quarter charges will be available on or about July 15.

THIRD ORD WORKSHOP SCHEDULED FOR MARCH

John Hart
Acting ORD ADP Coordinator

The Office of Research and Development has announced the 3rd ORD ADP Workshop to be held on May 10, 11, and 12 at the Environmental Research Laboratory in Athens, Georgia.

The workshop is aimed at the technical and scientific ADP user community throughout EPA. It is a forum for presenting formal papers on current projects related to ADP or projects for future implementation.

Additional details and registration forms can be obtained by contacting Ron Cullember (FTS 426-2317). Written requests should be addressed to:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Research and Development
Ron Cullember, OFAS (RD-674)
401 M Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20460

REGIONAL ADP BRANCH CHIEFS MEETING

Ted Standish
Region III ADP Branch Chief

A recent meeting of EPA Regional ADP Branch Chiefs revealed several concerns common to all regions. One item of concern was the number of Headquarter re-

quests for computer, system feasibility studies. Advanced knowledge of requirements for regional participation in studies and the need for coverage of proposed or revised systems in existing zero-based budgeting is of paramount concern. The regions have divided themselves into three groups as follows:

Regions I, II, IX, and X
III, IV, and V
VI, VII, and VIII

At least one Region from each group will take the lead to respond to study requests with the others in the group participating as required.

In preparation for the procurement of DP services during the 1981 to 1990 period, MIDSD is developing standards for Regions to use in documenting their systems. Region III has been designated as a focal point to report on regional attitudes related to the feasibility of data standardization between systems.

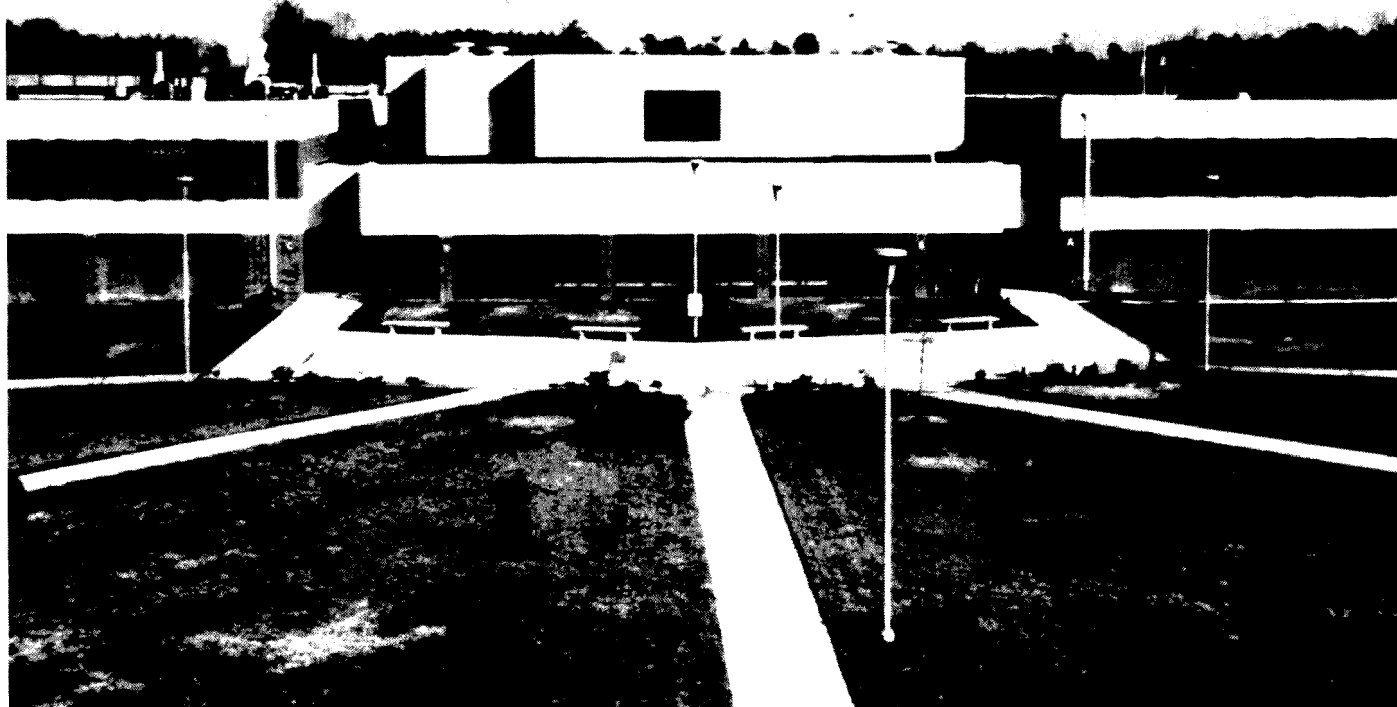
Joel Brandon has left as the ADP Chief of Region V to undertake a position with the Computer Sciences Corporation. The position is currently being filled. Dave White, ADP Chief of Region VI, moved to the Surveillance and Analysis Division and Jim Sims from the Naval Air Test Center, Patuxent River, Md., has been selected as his replacement beginning March 1, 1978.

EPA Data Talk is published monthly by the National Computer Center, Management Information and Data Systems Division for EPA personnel and contractors interested in general ADP topics.

Comments and suggestions are solicited and should be addressed to:

Editor, EPA Data Talk
National Computer Center
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North Carolina 27711

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