

DATA NETWORK PROBLEMS

A survey by EUSIDIC — the European Association of Information Services — has highlighted many unsatisfactory aspects of Europe's public data networks. Among other factors, the survey disclosed that nearly one third of public data network calls in Europe failed to establish a satisfactory connection — and that 75% of the problem for failed calls could be laid directly at the door of the PTT networks.

The survey analysed 3604 calls made during the week of 27–31 January 1986 by members of EUROLUG (the Joint European Online User Group) which is run under the aegis of EUSIDIC. Out of 1004 logged calls to Britain's PSS, for example, 296 did not result in connection — a failure rate of 29.5%. Italy fared worse, with 78 unsuccessful calls out of 229 (34%), Belgium achieved 217 failures out of 541 calls (40.1%). The worst record was achieved by France, with 113 failures out of 231 calls (48.9%), though calls purely within France via Transpac, the public data network, failed on 60 occasions out of 113 (53.1%).

Chairman of EUSIDIC's Telecommunication Chapter, Harry Collier, said that 22.73% of the failures occurred at the level of the local node, 60.4% occurred within the public networks,

and less than 16.85% failed because the service being accessed was unavailable at the time the call was attempted (EUSIDIC cross-checked these calls with logs of host computer down times and the figure was considerably lower than appeared from the PTT messages). 'If these data are examined alongside the EUSIDIC/INTUG survey of users' interests and dislikes concerning public data networks' Mr Collier claimed, 'it is apparent that public data network users are being treated with considerable indifference by a poor service. It often seems that the PTTs are not aware of the level of problem experienced by their customers. No one would use an airline if only two out of three scheduled flights actually arrived,' he continued. 'Our survey also showed considerable dissatisfaction with the way networks handle error messages.' During a separate survey of 100 European public data network users, EUSIDIC found the top problem (selected from a list of 10) was 'insufficient information in error messages' followed by 'lack of alternative routings when connections fail'.

Quoted in the survey is a British user who claimed that 'PSS is programmed so that no error messages appear showing a fault in the UK network', and a Swedish user who claimed that 'the error message says "call cleared by request" even when you are thrown out in the middle of your search!'

A copy of EUSIDIC's *Public Data Networks — Survey Results* is available to interested applicants. Its 13 pages of text and tables contain the results of the survey of users plus the results of the monitoring week, cross-tabulated by European country. EUSIDIC together with INTUG and EUROLUG will be repeating both surveys in 1986 and 1987.

For further information and a copy of the report contact Helen Henderson, EUSIDIC, PO Box 429, London W4 1UJ England.

TYPESET BY TELEPHONE

In an industry where technological advancements are the norm rather than the exception, Australian typesetters are preparing for the widespread introduction and application of 'desktop publishing'.

Desktop publishing is a term used to describe the process of producing typesetting for brochures, advertising, books, magazines or newsletters in-house, on a personal computer.

One such system, developed by Photoset Computer Service, is designed to offer the power of 'big system' typesetting on a NEC APCIII personal computer. The Text Publishing System has many product features which set it apart from other typesetting systems. Standard system components such as dictionary hyphenation, automatic kerning, picture cuts, tabular settings, rule drawing and shape setting, are complemented by a host of special operations which make it effective and easy to use.

A sophisticated and comprehensive text editor is included, which appeals to those involved in creative writing. The Page Previewer enables pages to be checked on the personal computer screen before final transfer to the typesetter. Other modules include page layout and pagination.

Perhaps the most exciting feature of the system is its page and text transmission capabilities. With a telephone modem, users can typeset, layout, edit text, and assemble pages, send them through to Photoset Computer Services typesetting bureau via the telephone, and have the bromides returned, ready for printing, within two hours. The cost of such a service is around \$6.50 an A4 page, irrespective of the number of characters.

The Text Publishing System also has the ability to drive a laser printer, which produces near typeset quality material suitable for sales brochures, newsletters, and general printed matter.

To find out more, contact Photoset Computer Service Pty Limited, 195 Elizabeth Street, Sydney. Telephone: 264 7077. Chris Diez or Maree Norman will help you.

Take a trunk of books . . .

Do you know which Australian State had a lending library before it was officially settled? It was South Australia and its library service began with a trunk of books brought by settler Robert Gouger in 1836.

The trunk was dropped into the Port River and had to be retrieved from the mud flats. This story is included in *A Trunk Full of Books* by Dr Carl Bridges which was launched on September at the recently refurbished Mortlock Library of South Australia.

Wakefield Press are the publishers of the book which is a history of the State Library of South Australia and includes entertaining vignettes of librarians and readers.

DISABLED YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROJECT

The LAA has recently held discussions with a representative of the NSW Society for Crippled Children concerning the Disabled Youth Employment Project which is funded by the Commonwealth Government.

The aim of the programme is to help physically disabled young people in the Sydney metropolitan area find employment and the Society feels that library assistant positions would be particularly appropriate for such people. The people it wishes to place are aged up to 35 and generally possess the School Certificate. Most are looking for positions in the western suburbs of Sydney.

In the short time the scheme has been operating, the employment team has been successful in motivating and placing clients of the Society in employment. If you feel that your library may have a suitable vacancy, please contact Ms Reshmisaynor, Employment Officer, Youth Employment Project, NSW Society for Crippled Children, Suite 3a, 1st Floor, 144 Marsden Street, Parramatta 2150, phone (02) 633 1311.

Louise Lansley

Industrial Information & Research Office

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