

union des associations internationales union of international associations

SECRETARIAT GENERAL: RUE WASHINGTON 40 - 1050 BRUXELLES
(BELGIQUE) TEL. (32 2) 640 41 09 - 640 18 08 - FAX (32 2) 646 05 25
- E-mail: uia@uia.be

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International Organization Data on CD-ROM 350,000 Hyperlinks on the new UIA CD-ROM

A. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Hyperlinked organizational relationships

Information on some 20,000 international governmental and nongovernmental organizations has long been available in reference book form in the 3-volume *Yearbook of International Organizations* (now in its 32nd edition) edited by the Union of International Associations. This information is now also being made available on CD-ROM in a hypertext format through the widely used Folio Bound Views interface.

In practice this means that users can now explore the complex networks of relationships between organizations through some 120,000 hyperlinks. These hyperlinks allow the user to "jump" from one organization to another in the network (by clicking with a mouse). Such explorations are much more cumbersome, if not impossible, in book form.

Clarifying complex organization networks

It is important to recognize that many organizations are the focal points of complex networks of relationships. A United Nations agency such as the Food and Agricultural Organization is linked to 546 bodies. UNESCO is linked to some 1,030 international bodies. The complex of 186 bodies making up the European Union institutions is very difficult to explore without hypertext assistance. The new CD-ROM has some 1,600 links between such EU bodies, and a further 1,837 to nongovernmental bodies, in a form unavailable from any other source. The European Commission alone is indicated as having 266 links with other intergovernmental bodies, and a further 558 with NGOs. Hypertext media thus contribute significantly to the transparency of institutional systems.

Release of new organization data and search potentials

Language barriers are a major issue in international organization information. A very rich multilingual thesaurus has been developed to enable users to interact with the data according to their language preference. For example, German users can use German words to access information only available in English or other languages. Linguistic variants in geographic terms are reconciled through the same device.

The space and cost restrictions of the book format have also been released by the new CD-ROM format. This means that for the first time the entire database of over 40,000 organisations has been able to be published. It also opens up virtually unlimited indexing and search possibilities, aided by full indexing of all words in the organization profiles. Specific searches can be made on particular paragraphs of the organisation, specific references to individual countries, and a host of other specific information fields and combinations of keywords.

B. INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS AND PERSONALITIES

A separate CD-ROM database, based on the *International Congress Calendar*, provides

information on tens of thousands of past and planned international meetings through to the year 2010. Many are organized by international organizations to which hyperlinks are provided for supplementary information. Also cross-referenced, through hyperlinks to the organizations, is a *Who's Who in International Organizations* with biographical information.

C. WORLD PROBLEMS AND HUMAN POTENTIAL

Cycles of vicious problems

Much effort has gone into the focus on seemingly isolated world problems, such as unemployment, boredom, endangered species, desertification or corruption. Work on the newly published **Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential** has now shifted its focus to the hunt for vicious **cycles of problems**. A cycle is a chain of problems, with each aggravating the next -- with the last looping back to aggravate the first in the chain. The more obvious loops may be composed of only 3 or 4 problems. Far less obvious are those composed of 7 or more. An example is: *Alienation* → *Youth gangs* → *Neighbourhood control by criminals* → *Psychological stress of urban environment* → *Substance abuse* → *Family breakdown* → *Alienation*. Such cycles are vicious because they are self-sustaining. Identifying them is also no easy matter. Like the search for strange particles in physics, much computer time is required to track through the aggravating chains linking problems. A preliminary search along 9 million such pathways has so far identified 19,000 cycles composed of up to 7 problems.

Volume 1 of the 3-volume Encyclopedia (now in its 4th edition) currently describes 12,000 **world problems** clustered into 320 overlapping hierarchies in 1,200 pages. The problems are linked by some 120,000 relationships of 7 types. Problems included are those identified in international periodicals but especially in the documents of some 20,000 international non-profit organizations (profiled in the companion 3-volume **Yearbook of International Organizations**, now in its 32nd edition). The Encyclopedia includes problems which such groups choose to perceive and act upon, whether or not their existence is denied by others claiming greater expertise. Indeed such claims and counter-claims figure in many of the problem descriptions in order to reflect the often paralyzing dynamics of international debate. In the light of the interdependence demonstrated among world problems in every sector, emphasis is placed on the need for approaches which are sufficiently complex to encompass the factions, conflicts and rival worldviews that undermine collective initiative towards a promising future.

Human potential

Volume 2 of the Encyclopedia contains the most comprehensive description of the variety of approaches to **human development**. While their intention may be to alleviate suffering, paradoxically their blinkered pursuit is often a prime cause of world problems, notably in the case of religious conflict. Not only are there some 1,400 understandings of human development from the spiritual and psychological disciplines of different cultures and traditions, but also 3,050 modes of awareness or experience that are reported to be accessible through such disciplines, often through identifiable sequences or pathways. Buddhism offers the most elaborate perspective, requiring 1,360 interlinked entries.

The Encyclopedia takes an unusual approach to the range of **human values**. Rather than limiting its focus to the dozen values most frequently discussed (peace, justice, and the like), Volume 2 identifies 987 "constructive" or positive values as well as 1,990 "destructive" or negative values. The positive and negative values are clustered into 230 value polarities (like beauty-ugliness) to transcend the semantic confusion associated with many value-words. It is however the negative value terms which are used to sharpen the problematic nature of the problem names given in Volume 1. Negative values are systematically cross-referenced to both world problem names and to the complementary positive values (via the polarities). For the first time it becomes possible to

trace the positive values in terms of which problems becomes perceptible. Also for the first time, values are cross-referenced to human development where particular approaches or experiences enhance the understanding of a particular value. The editors explore a variety of possibilities of organizing value terms as a prelude to any justification for the current preoccupation with so-called basic values.

Sustainable strategies

Organizational strategies and programmes that focus on only one problem in the chain tend to fail because the cycle has the capacity to regenerate itself. Worse still is that such cycles tend to interlock, creating the complex of global problems which causes so many to despair. The good news is that identifying vicious cycles is a first step towards designing **cycles of strategies** to reverse or break them. Better still some problems are linked by serendipitous cycles in which each problem alleviates the next.

Volume 3 of the Encyclopedia, published in October 1995, profiles over 29,200 linked **strategies** currently employed by international bodies, whether in response to world problems or to enhance particular values or modes of development. It also provide the first systematic identification of several thousand vicious problem cycles to which such strategies need to respond. It identifies **mutually reinforcing strategic cycles**.

Although it is still possible to gather and configure so much detail into book form (or onto the **CD-ROM version** of the Encyclopedia and Yearbook), the editors are much concerned with new ways of visualizing complex networks of relationships. The challenge is to find meaningful ways to navigate through such complexity and to evoke imaginative insights in response to it. In a section on transformative approaches, the editors explore the implications for computer graphics, transformative conferencing and the design of policy cycles capable of responding to vicious problem cycles.

D. NEW EMPHASES

Much emphasis is placed on the potential of **new metaphors for governance** as a major unexplored resource to enable paradigm shifts. The suggestion is made that many institutions and policies are trapped in inadequate policy metaphors. In this spirit the Encyclopedia even contains an extensive exploration of the relevance to governance of fruitful cross-fertilization between poetry-making and policy-making -- seen as equivalent to the mythical challenge of arranging a marriage between Beauty and the Beast.

The Encyclopedia offers radically different perspectives to policy-makers, social researchers and those concerned with development strategy. It is also fascinating reading for any individual with concern for human affairs and wary of the risks of "tunnel vision" in conventional approaches to crises and opportunities.

Most encyclopedias focus only on positive, sanitized aspects of society, presenting an idealized worldview that denies the shadow of humanity. This is one of the few even to mention the existence of such phenomena as corruption (96 entries), torture and many others that do not appear on the agendas of international conferences. It attempts to present the world as many experience it, whether negatively or positively.

Users of the Encyclopedia are encouraged to discover new approaches to understanding and action through the deliberate juxtaposition, within the same context, of contradictory perceptions and fundamentally incompatible viewpoints. By juxtaposing different, but complementary, perspectives, the Encyclopedia is deliberately designed to challenge unquestioned patterns of response to the crises of the times and to evoke new insights in the reader. In this sense it is full of shocks and creative surprises.

Interactive editing: user changes to databases

Both the Encyclopedia and the Yearbook are ongoing programmes of the Union of International Associations. As a nonprofit research institute, founded in Brussels in 1910, it now functions as a clearing house for information on other international nonprofit organizations, whether governmental or nongovernmental.

The clearinghouse function performed by the Union of International Associations (UIA, founded in Brussels in 1910) is unusual in that international bodies around the world effectively function as editorial partners in progressively refining information relating to their concerns in every field of activity. The databases are at no time considered complete, rather they reflect "work in progress" to clarify the complexity of the international community and its actions.

It is thus expected that the unusual process of interactive editorial collaboration will be further encouraged and enhanced by the release of the CD-ROM publications, and the complementary activities being pursued by the UIA to make available its databases on the Internet (to be reported at a later date, but interested readers can get a preview by visiting the UIA's home page on the World Wide Web -<http://www.uia.org>).

The software allows users to make their own additions and changes to the data. These are saved as special overlay files "through" which users subsequently view the data on the CD-ROM. Different users may have their own overlay files, making the tool very interesting for institutional users and student projects. Feedback of suggested changes to the Union of International Associations is welcomed to improve the data in subsequent releases.

E. INFORMATION ON CD-ROM VERSIONS

Technical data:

DOS, Windows and Mac versions of Folio Views access software **all** provided.

DOS configuration (minimum): MS-DOS 3.3, PC compatible 386 with 4 MB RAM, screen EGA or VGA, 7 MB disk. No print/export facilities.

Windows configuration: MS-DOS 3.3, PC compatible 486 with 8 MB RAM (recommended), screen VGA, Windows 3.1 (or 95), 7 MB disk. Print/export: restricted for Yearbook; free for Encyclopedia.

Macintosh configuration: System 7 with minimum 68020 processor and MB RAM; access is accelerated on a Power Mac. Print/export: free for Encyclopedia; none for Yearbook

CD-ROM reader DIN/ISO 9660 (2-spin recommended). Access from local CD-ROM reader only; write for information on network version

Availability:

Addition of the DOS and Mac facilities has delayed release to 15th December 1995 for both the **Yearbook+Biography** disk and the **Encyclopedia** disk. It is expected to release the **Yearbook+Calendar** disk early in 1996. A **French language** version of the Yearbook is planned for 1996. All disks include **demonstration versions** of other databases. Further information and orders may be addressed to: UIA, 40 rue Washington, B-1050 Brussels, Belgium. Fax: +32 2 646 05 25. Email: info@uia.be.

Prices

The 3-volume book edition of the Yearbook is available at DM 1,398, or with the CD-ROM (including the biographical data from the *Who's Who in International Organizations*) at DM 2,800. Without the book, that *Yearbook Plus* CD-ROM is available for DM 1,800. The 3-volume *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* is available at DM 1,200 (US\$ 865), or with the CD-ROM at DM 1,600. Without the book, that *Encyclopedia Plus* CD-ROM is available for DM 780. The Encyclopedia CD-ROM is also available to individuals at a special

price of US \$350.