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Dissemination of Energy Information: An Overview of the Energy Information Administration Electronic Dissemination Program

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Goals of the Energy Information Administration (EIA) Electronic Dissemination
Program

- Maximize the use and ease of use of EIA data and analysis products.
- Minimize the cost to both the taxpayer and user.
- Use newer electronic technologies to reduce cost and improve usefulness.

Strategies

These objectives will be achieved by using the following strategy:

- Use appropriate technologies such as the Web, FTP, listserv, etc., to disseminate information to a wide variety of technologically diverse users.
- Move away from the old publication paradigm which was to write out by hand, type, print, mail, and answer the phone, to a new paradigm.
- The new paradigm consists of type (as little as possible), publish electronically in a variety of formats, and customize products to specific user needs.

.**Dissemination Technologies**

Specific dissemination technologies and their advantages consist of:

- Internet servers where distribution is almost instantaneous; there exists a client base of between 5 and 25 million people that is growing rapidly; marginal production costs are fairly low.

- Data applications server meets specific customer needs while minimizing their costs. This technology does not require the downloading and installation of large software packages.
- Compact disc, which holds a large volume of data, is easy to search and use the results in other products, has very low marginal costs when compared to paper and reaches a fairly broad customer group. Libraries are very enthusiastic because of the shelf space that is saved as well as the ease of using the search engine.
- Listserv (e-mail) has a very low marginal cost, provides interested readers with short reports very quickly, allows only those customers who are interested to belong.
- Dialup server allows users without an Internet connection to retrieve files from our FTP server.
- Fax on demand requires only a fax machine for those users without other forms of electronic access.
- Broadcast fax is the equivalent of the listserv but for those users with a fax connection.

Results

Experience to date has shown:

- Very rapid growth in the use of the Web site, averaging about 25 percent per month between July, 1995 (when the site first opened) through February, 1996. The EIA Web site averaged about 11,000 unique daily users per month in February.
- A decline in the use of the existing dialup (call EPUB) service that has been in place for several years.
- In a period of just 6 weeks use of the listserv has increased from nothing to about 1,000 users.
- A recent survey of phone-in customers has shown that almost 50 percent prefer or find acceptable the electronic products as opposed to the paper publications.
- About 800 libraries and private individuals have ordered the compact disc. Private sales have started slowly but are expected to build.