/* Written 11:01 am Jul 26, 1988 by igc:gsears in gn:apc.brazil */
/* ---------- "ALTERNEX" ---------- */
From ibase Fri Jul 22 10:32 PDT 1988
To: gsears
Subject: an nd a bas
Status: RO

Dear Jeff,

This is the first draft of the project. We actually have the money ready, but to go ahead we need Enzo's OK. Also, this project may become part of a larger one, which includes the development of a NGDO databank and a UNDP-sponsored conference of Brazilian NGDOs.

Please send me your comments as soon as possible. I am taking a 15-day vacation beginning Jul.25. Hope to have your answer and Enzo's ready by then.

On the technical aspects of the thing, there are several new 386-based machines on the market which might actually be cheaper than Everex. However, I believe you guys do know this and are far ahead than me in checking cheaper alternatives. We will begin testing of the AIDS system in the beginning of August. I will send you word of it so you can try from wherever you are. This would be actually a good test of our capacity to handle the weird protocols of the X.25 line.

A big hug to you and all friends.
Carlos Afonso.

IBASE
INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE ANALISES SOCIAIS E ECONOMICAS
Rua Vicente de Souza, 29
22251 Rio de Janeiro RJ-- BRAZIL
phone: (21) 286-0348

Data comm IDs: telex 2136466 BASE BR
EIES 1615
GEONET GEO2:IBASE
PEACENET IBASE

PROJECT PROPOSAL:
INSTALLATION OF AN IGC-COMPATIBLE NODE IN BRAZIL
(THE ALTERNEX NETWORK NODE)

first draft
22-July-88

INTRODUCTION

Sharing information using data communication tools is proving to be essential in communications and collaboration. With the advances in the so-called "microchip revolution", many small groups can have access to a microcomputer equipped with the means (a modem and a communications program) to exchange information worldwide through telephone lines. The telecommunications field has grown dramatically in the last decade, driven largely by the needs of transnational corporations. At the same time, several academic computer networks have sprung up, which have helped build communications links between professors and students in several developed countries. More recently, networks have been organized by non-profit groups. Examples of these networks include Peacenet, Greennet, Econet, the Interdoc group, and others.

In some developing countries, there is also a growing utilization of microcomputer-based tools for data management by many non-governmental organizations. Countries such as Peru, Chile, the Philippines, and Brazil are examples where computer-

efforts by independent research and documentation groups are being made to achieve more effective means of exchanging information.

In the case of Brazil, there is already an informal network of non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs)-- some of them equipped with microcomputers. At least 25 of them are preparing themselves to become users of national and international communication systems. Among these organizations are rural and urban labor unions, independent research and documentation centers, education and training groups, community and neighborhood groups, etc.

On the other hand, the Brazilian government, through its state agency Telebras and its communications company Embratel, has installed modern systems of packet switching (the Renpac system) on a national scale, thus permitting relatively cheap and highly efficient data exchange between microcomputers.

THE EXPERIENCE OF IBASE

Among the Brazilian NGDOs, IBASE, a research and consultancy NGDO created with the main objective of democratizing reliable socio-economic information to social groups, has been the first of its kind in Brazil to use microcomputers for social and economic research, and also for data communications. As a matter of fact, based on IBASE's experience and know-how, many Brazilian and Latin American NGDOs have become users of these new tools.

Founded in 1981, IBASE is a non-profit, non-partisan institute. IBASE's constituency is mainly rural and urban unions, church and grass-roots groups, educational and community groups and other NGDOs. IBASE's information and studies are circulated through our regular publications, books, newsletters, radio programs and audio-visual kits, as well as through the press. IBASE also provides computer and data communication services, and is linked to major NGDO networks worldwide.

An important part of IBASE's mandate is maintaining some databases on social and economic issues for wide free use by social groups. The following databases are available at IBASE's computer system:

- CRDOC: the only of its kind in Brazil, this database includes all relevant social, political and economic national news from the Brazilian press of national circulation. Nearly 15 of the most important newspapers and magazines are read daily by a team of journalists, who synthesize and transfer selected news to the database. This means an average of 600 news per month since January, 1983. The database already contains nearly 40 thousand news which can be selected by any combination of 3 main themes, 75 subthemes and thousands of keywords.

- SIDSA: an acronym in Portuguese for Data System on AIDS, SIDSA is the first AIDS database in Brazil maintained by a NGDO. Through an agreement with ABIA (Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association, the Brazilian chapter of IIAF-- International Interdisciplinary AIDS Foundation), IBASE has developed and operates the database, which contains information on the disease, forms of treatment and diagnosis, Brazilian statistical data, database of research centers and experts, information on referral centers and hospitals, etc.

- IPP: this database contains about 800 community-related projects. This is a set of very diversified alternative experiences at the grass-roots level (on health, basic education, agriculture, community organization, etc), organized in a computerized reference data bank which functions as the main tool of a node of information exchange among hundreds of community

groups throughout Brazil.

Several other smaller databases (on rural violence, economic and social indicators, union movements, etc) are active on IBASE's computer system. This is updated and reliable information that could be made much more accessible if it were available on a communications network node.

THE SIDSA EXPERIMENT

SIDSA has been designed to be available over Embratel's packet switching network. Remote access to the database should be possible worldwide at the end of August. The system will use the same communications technique as IGC's systems, namely, linking a microcomputer containing the database to the packet switching network via high-speed, X.25 lines. Since users having a microcomputer and a modem can use the packet switching network at relatively very cheap rates, this means that computerized information on AIDS in Brazil will be instantly available throughout the country.

This development has given the IBASE team a good measure of expertise to handle communication systems and to create the means for wider access to our data.

A NETWORK NODE IN LATIN AMERICA

Contacts between IBASE and IGC have resulted in the proposal to install in Rio de Janeiro, at IBASE's Data Center, an electronic mail and remote access database system which would be compatible with (and automatically linked to) the IGC network. This would provide a closer network node to Latin American NGDOs and would help to facilitate links among Brazilian NGDOs. In addition, the expertise to install and operate a network node would be available to other Latin American groups. Also, besides IBASE's, many other NGDOs' databases could be offered through the node. Finally, since it is intended as a non-profit operation geographically closer to its users, utilization of the node would be cheaper.

Therefore, IBASE has decided to seek funds to be able to cover hardware and software installation costs for an IGC-compatible electronic mail, conferencing and remote access database node, which we call Alternex. Based on a specially adapted microcomputer, the system would be able to keep nearly 5 thousand users registered and would handle simultaneously as many as 15 users from Brazil and from abroad.

The special X.25 data line has been installed at IBASE's Data Center. When the node starts its operations, the SIDSA database as well other computerized information from IBASE will be available on Alternex.

Discussions with other NGDOs in Brazil indicate that there would be at least 50 users immediatly joining the system. Also, many NGDOs from Peru, Chile, Argentina, Central America and the Caribbean who are presently members of the INTERDOC network, as well as the ones participating in an international campaign on Latin America's external debt (the FONDAD group), would be using the system. We estimate therefore an initial total of nearly 120 group users. To these we have to add many persons who would become Alternex users in the short-term. The total short-term user estimate is in this case nearly 200, which more than justifies in itself the installation of the node in Brazil.

OPERATIONAL COSTS

IBASE already has a staff of 4 programmers and 3 computer operators. Most of the daily tasks, as well as the set-up work, would be handled by these technicians with support from the IBASE

staff. Also, a secretary to handle all users correspondence will be available. IBASE has a team of 7 journalists, who will be in charge of designing and circulating information materials on Alternex.

As part of its mandate, IBASE has been providing technical advice to groups in Brazil and other Latin American countries. Thus, our Data Center team is already prepared to help other groups to go through the technical steps to hook up their microcomputers to Alternex.

Thus, in principle, there will be no need to hire additional staff to keep the system in operation.

One of the expensive operational items is the leasing of the X.25 line, which has a minimum cost of nearly US$600 per month. However, for the first year of operation, this is covered by the project of the SIDSA database. Also, if the we projected short-term number of users is effectively reached, their monthly payments to use the system will cover this operational cost, as well as the relatively small maintenance costs of the equipment. Monthly charges on the non-profit IGC network is $10 per month. We believe that our charge may be even smaller for self-sufficient operation of the system, since staff's salaries are already part of IBASE's regular budget.

PROPOSED EXECUTION SCHEDULE

According to an agreement in principle between IBASE, IGC's representative and the UNDP, arrangements would be made for IGC to purchase, set up, test and ship the equipment and software (as described below) through the UNDP office in Brazil.

Details of funds transfers are to be set up in common agreement among the 3 organizations involved.

We suggest the following tentative schedule:

August: purchase and testing of the equipment and software.
September: shipping of equipment and software via UNDP.
October: installation and testing at IBASE's Data Center, with the participation of at least one IGC technician.

ESTIMATED COSTS

Hardware and software costs have been estimated by IGC staff and IBASE's technicians. Presently, the X.25 line is already installed at IBASE's office, which includes the high-speed V.32 modem (leased from Embratel). Thus, the equipment and software list is as follows:

1. Equipment:

Quant.	Description	Estimated US$ costs
01	Everex 386/20 microcomputer	3,000.00
01	200 Mb hard disk	1,400.00
01	8-megabyte RAM expansion	4,000.00
01	X.25 communications card	1,000.00
04	terminals	2,000.00
01	16-port terminal card	1,000.00
01	backup cartridge tape unit	1,000.00
02	9600-baud MNP modems	1,000.00
--	Reserve for additional equipment	3,000.00
	Total equipment.....	US$ 17,400.00

Quant.	Description	Estimated US$ costs
01	UNIX operating system	600.00
01	Informix database system	1,000.00
--	Reserve for additional software	1,000.00
	Total software.....	US$ 2,600.00
	TOTAL EQUIPMENT + SOFTWARE.....	US$ 20,000.00

An additional cost to be considered is travel and hotel costs of the IGC technician during the installation and testing of the system in Brazil. We would ask the UNDP to consider supporting this part of the project, which would amount to about US$3,500.00 (two or three-week stay in Rio).

[END OF MESSAGE]