

compiled by Alan H. Fielding, Department of Biological Sciences, Manchester Metropolitan University, Chester St., Manchester M1 5GD, UK

News and Views

Probe: newsletter for the USDA Plant Genome Research Programme

Probe is the title of a free quarterly newsletter published by the USDA Plant Genome Research Program. It aims to facilitate interaction throughout the plant genome mapping community and beyond. Much of the information, for example database descriptions, could be of interest to CABIOS readers. For further information contact: Plant Genome Data and Information Center, USDA–NAL, 10301 Baltimore Blvd, Beltsville, MD 20705-2351, USA.

Reference Manager updates

In response to rapidly changing hardware, software, and information technology, Research Information Systems, Inc. has begun a new Maintenance Service for users of its popular bibliographic management program, Reference Manager.

Subscribers to the Maintenance Service, priced at \$59.00 per year, automatically receive all software upgrades (except major new version releases) and unlimited technical support, which is toll-free in the USA and Canada.

Because Reference Manager must interact with many third-party software packages and information services, such as word processors and on-line and CD-ROM database services, it is updated frequently. For example, when Microsoft releases a new version of its popular Word software, Reference Manager must be modified to retain compatibility. Subscribers to the Maintenance Service automatically receive each new version. According to the company, 8–10 such software modifications are released each year.

Research Information Systems, Inc. is now shipping a local area network (LAN) version of their popular Reference Update current-awareness service for scientists in the fields of biology and medicine. All Reference Update subscribers, both network and individual, receive a weekly file containing the tables of contents and, optionally, the abstracts from more than 1200 leading scientific publications.

The LAN version is fully compatible with Novell, Banyan Vines, 3-Com, and most other MS-DOS based network configurations. Users may simultaneously access and search any number of weekly reference files residing on the server. The program maintains separate information for each user, including custom search strategies and computer configuration.

For details, please contact: Research Information Systems, Inc., 2355 Camino Vida Roble, Carlsbad, CA 92009-1572, USA.

International Congress on Modelling and Simulation: Modelling Change in Environmental and Socioeconomic Systems

The congress incorporates the 10th Biennial Conference of the Modelling and Simulation Society of Australia, Inc. MSSA Inc is an affiliate of the International Association for Mathematics and Computers in Simulation (IMACS). The congress will be a joint meeting with the International Society for Ecological Modelling (ISEM) and the International Environmetrics Society (TIES), as well as with IMACS. There will be four Presidential and five Keynote Addresses. Abstracts are due March 8, 1993 with full papers due August 2, 1993.

For further information and registration forms contact Tony Jakeman, CRES, Institute of Advanced Studies, Australian National University, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia, email tony@cres.anu.edu.au.

Identification and ecology of North Atlantic algae

ETI, the Expert-center for Taxonomic Identification at the University of Amsterdam, have introduced the first in a series of scientific multi-media CD-ROM disks suitable for identification of organisms, the study of biodiversity, the preservation of the environment, and education. Produced at the Institute of Marine Research in Bergen Norway, 'Linnaeus Protist' is a valuable collection of information on identification and ecology of North Atlantic algae.

Information provided by more than a dozen prominent North European scientists is included on 312 algal species, many of which also occur in other parts of the world. Information includes text descriptions, literature references, on-screen micrographs at photographic quality, methods suitable for algal groups, distribution maps of toxic and bloom-forming organisms, an introductory section on protist groups and life cycles, and a glossary of scientific terms used in the program. All functions are accessed via a simple graphic user interface using a mouse.

Linnaeus Protist requires a Macintosh Plus or better computer with at least 1 Mbyte of RAM, and HyperCard 2.0 or higher. A colour monitor is suggested for viewing of micrographs.

Linnaeus is System 7 compatible. It is possible to change any part of the program after a copy is made to the hard disk of the computer. This allows users to expand the data base and to use the program for their ongoing research projects. Through special funding from UNESCO, Linnaeus Protist is available without charge for the shipping & handling price of \$32 US. There is no extra charge for the extensive manual that supports the program. Work is in progress on CDs covering other groups of organisms and environmental areas. Contact: Dr Ronald Sluys, ETI, University of Amsterdam, PO Box 4766, 1009 AT Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Tel: (31) 20 525 5445, Fax: (31) 20 525 7238, email: ronald@eti.bio.uva.nl.

Universities Funding Council gives go-ahead for advanced communications network

The Universities Funding Council (UFC) has announced the development of SuperJANET, an advanced communications network for higher education in Great Britain. The contract for the new venture which has been won by BT is worth £18 million over four years, subject to a review at the end of the installation of the pilot phase. SuperJANET will offer higher education and research institutions in Great Britain the opportunity to access the most advanced communications services to support learning and research activities.

SuperJANET, which uses high performance optical fibre technology, can be used to transmit voice, data and images. The applications available initially will include: high performance computing, distance learning, electronic publishing, library document distribution, medical imaging and multimedia information services. A pilot network will be established during January–March 1993 which will connect six sites: Cambridge, Edinburgh and Manchester Universities, Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine and University College, London, and the SERC Rutherford Appleton Laboratory. Additional sites will be added during 1993–94 reaching a total of ~50. Further sites may be added subject to additional funding.

SuperJANET will complement the Joint Academic Network (JANET) which has served the academic community since 1983 on 200 sites. The advantages of the new network lie in its speed and the types of applications that it can support. SuperJANET can transmit up to 1000 million bits of information per second, ~1000 times faster than the JANET. This high speed allows the transmission of highly sophisticated image and voice communications in addition to data.

Mr Alan Miller, Chairman of the UFC's Information Systems Committee, said: 'SuperJANET will provide a pervasive high performance network offering wide opportunities not only for research but also for teaching applications. In some areas, for example medical imaging and the virtual memory library, it will be possible to develop entirely new applications. The increased capability will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of UK higher education, by allowing institutions to develop entirely new ways of storing, processing and distributing all types of information.'

Mr Geoff Manning, consultant to the UFC on SuperJANET, said 'The SuperJANET extension to JANET delivers an

infrastructure that spans all academic and research sites and offers a broad spectrum performance to suit all needs including those of academics, research institutes, government departments, industry and commerce.'

Molecular Arts Corporation releases 3-D molecular animation screen saver

Molecular Arts Corporation (MAC) has announced a new release of its popular Windows-based screen saver—chemSAVER™, a desk-top utility for chemists, chemical engineers, or others interested in chemistry. Version 2.0 of chemSAVER offers sophisticated 3-D graphics, many user-selectable 3-D visualization styles, user-definable animations, and a library of over 100 3-D molecular structures. Chemists can easily add their own molecules to the library for an unlimited variety of screen images.

Vice-President of Marketing for Molecular Arts Corporation, Laura Voyles, says of the new product, 'chemSAVER is an easy-to-use utility that provides protection from phosphor burn-in of computer screens that are on all day.' She went on to say, 'What makes it so exciting is that it also provides a cost-effective way for accomplishing basic molecular structure visualization tasks. Besides protecting the substantial investment in your computer's display monitor, chemSAVER is thought-provoking, educational, and just plain fun!'

Graphical user interface: by utilizing the popular Microsoft Windows™ graphical user interface, chemSAVER is very easy to install, learn, use, and customize. All of chemSAVER's extensive controls and features are accessible via simple menus and dialog boxes. Also, support for Microsoft's common dialog controls is incorporated into this release.

Unique features: the chemSAVER utility is the only known Windows screen saver that performs real-time animations of 3-D objects. 3-D graphics capabilities, formerly available on 3-D workstations only, have been brought to the PC in a cost-effective package. Simple dialog box controls offer the user a wide range of animation controls, rendering styles, color schemes, and depth cue mechanisms. It is also a simple matter for the user to add molecular structures of particular interest to their research.

Availability: the commercial release of chemSAVER (Version 2.0) is concurrent with this announcement. A single-user industrial license is available for US\$59.95. Also included are a 26-page user manual, chemical structure library with over 100 molecules, and instructions for optimizing the program for particular hardware platforms. Discounts are available for academic organizations and non-profit institutes. This release of chemSAVER will operate on IBM PCs and PC-compatibles that support the Microsoft Windows 3.× graphical user interface. In the United States, chemSAVER is available directly from Molecular Arts Corporation. Prices outside North America are slightly higher.

For further information please contact Molecular Arts Corporation, 1532 East Katella Avenue, Anaheim, CA 92805, USA.