

# The nomenclature maze

By Katie Blake, June 1990  
PO Box 471  
ROSEVILLE NSW 2069

*Remember those 'buzzword generators' so popular in management journals a few years ago? They consisted of three columns of words like integrated, synergy, programmed, instruction, system, network, power, and so on. If you were looking for a good phrase to throw into a report, all you had to do was pick one word from each column, et voila! An instant buzzphrase.*

Sometimes it seems as though the information industry must use something similar to come up with names for new products and services. Take any two (or three) of the following bits, put them together in any order, and you have a name for your product or service:

Data, Dial, Aust, Intel, Info, Line, Tel, Com, Mail, Net, Link, Pac, Sat.

Just look at the real life examples. These all exist in Australia: ComNet and NetComm, Link, iLink and Infolink. InfoLink, Keylink, Netlink, IntelNet, Ilanet, Austpac, Infopac, Lawpac, Pacrim, Aussat, Satnet, IntelSat, Dialog, Dialcom, Telecom. See what I mean? My spell checker constantly questions not only the names, but their odd capitalisation. Capitals in the middles of words are common in this milieu, but Word doesn't consider them very proper. Even my poor old brain has difficulty sorting out which is which.

How does the newcomer find his/her way around? The names are so similar, but the products and services cover a very wide spectrum. They include telecommunications networks, hardware and software. They include information brokerage services, as well as online host services, and even optical publishing services. They include company names, electronic mail, and gateway services. Many are linked, with electronic mail services providing access to database services, and online host services providing electronic mail. Some provide access to others. Just when you think you have them straight, they shift and blur again. It is very confusing.

As an ex-librarian with a penchant for order, I thought I might do a quick whizz around, classifying under nice broad headings such as networks, gateways, host services, electronic mail and so forth. I quickly found that classification is not that easy — each product or service is often capable of being put under a number of those headings. So here, in a very rough

and ready sort of order, are some quick and easy explanations. This is by no means an exhaustive list.

AUSTPAC is a reserved service introduced by Telecom in December 1982. It is Australia's public packet-switching service, and is the telecommunications access point for most Australian online services. Some of those services, such as Ausinet, have their own networks, but also provide access via Austpac. As well as providing access to domestic information services, a link through to OTC's Data Access (see next) allows users to get to overseas services.

DATA ACCESS is also a reserved service, introduced by OTC in April 1979. It was then known as MIDAS. It is also a packet switched network, providing access to overseas hosts. So, for domestic services you use Austpac, for overseas hosts you use Data Access. Data Access can be used direct, or via Austpac. There are cost differences in those two paths. Austpac has a \$5 per month charge for each network user identification (NUI), Data Access has no monthly charge. Connect hour rates for Data Access are higher than Austpac's — \$22.00 per connect hour, as opposed to \$11.70 for overseas usage via Austpac. Both charge 60 cents per kilocharacter (or packet) for overseas communications. (In case you didn't know, a packet can be empty. If you enter a single letter or number, then press Enter, that sends a whole packet!)

VANGUARD is a newcomer. It is a new value added network (VAN) just released by OTC Enhanced Communications. It offers a dialup or leased line alternative to Austpac. It does not compete head on with Austpac as it is not a public network available to all individual users. However it does provide an alternative for online services or organisations who don't want to invest in their own network. OTC Dialcom, for instance, offers its users access via Vanguard, as does the State Library of NSW's Ilanet. I, as an individual, cannot

sign up for Vanguard. As a company, an organisation, I can. One of Vanguard's features is that it can provide an organisation with customised access to corporate hosts or databases provided through a menu service. I could log on and have it say 'Welcome Enterprise!' and give me my own tailored menu. Vanguard can provide gateways to both Austpac and Data Access.

INFOLINK is really the same network as Vanguard, under a different name and owner. It has recently announced that it can now access Pacificnet's high speed telex and facsimile service.

INFONET — Telecom now has equity in the global CSA-Infonet network with the aim of providing global network services. It uses international packet switching to provide end-to-end connectivity for corporate customers. For instance a company in Australia could provide access to an Australian database from overseas branches and receive a consolidated bill in Australia. So while OTC gets into domestic telecommunications with Vanguard, Telecom gets into international telecommunications with Infonet.

COMNET (as opposed to NetComm, the manufacturer of modems and telecommunications equipment), is a national value-added network operated by Paxus. ComNet falls into Paxus Services, which comprises most of the old Idaps organisation, as well as the old CsiroNet. Ausstats runs on this network, as did Australis.

DIALCOM is an international electronic mail service now owned by British Telecom. In Australia it is known as OTC Dialcom, and is operated by a company called Network Innovations. This company is a joint venture between OTC and British Telecom. Users join up by registering for a mailbox, or a number of mailboxes. Once you have your ID and password, you can send mail anywhere in the world. OTC Dialcom provides gateways to other online services, and can also hold databases itself.

The process of linking in to external databases is called Netlink. This is an expensive option for the regular online user, because you pay Dialcom charges in addition to Data Access charges, over and above the charges from the external host. There are information services associated with it, such as the Global Environment Monitor, and the News from China Service.

A number of organisations have re-selling arrangements with Dialcom. In effect, they purchase bulk mailboxes from OTC Dialcom and 'sublet' them to closed user groups. The biggest of those is Ilanet, which we will look at later. Dialcom in its turn has re-selling arrangements with other services too — for instance it is possible to use IntelNet (see later) via Dialcom, paying a \$6 per minute charge as opposed to IntelNet's flat rate per search structure.

**ILANET** — this is the service operated by the State Library of NSW to provide a messaging and interlibrary loan network to Australian libraries. Basically, it is a closed user group of OTC Dialcom. In addition to all the basic services provided by Dialcom, there are services such as Bulletin Board, gatewaying to other systems such as ABN, and so on. It is actually cheaper to be on Ilanet, (in effect sub-letting a Dialcom mailbox from the State Library) than it is to be an OTC Dialcom user direct. There is a monthly mailbox charge of \$33 from Dialcom, while Ilanet only charges \$20. That adds up over the years. Other services are regularly being added to Ilanet, and now Powersearch is available. (See under IntelNet for an explanation of Powersearch.)

**INTELNET** — This is OTC's name for the smart gateway service from Telebase Systems in the US. In the US it is known as EasyNet, on CompuServe it is called IQuest, on Western Union it is called InfoMaster, and it is called other names elsewhere in the world. It provides a common, user-friendly front end to the the databases of thirteen online vendors, including Dialog, Orbit, BRS, Data-Star, NewsNet, VU/Text, and Pergamon Financial Data Services. It provides a menu approach both to database selection and searching. It has a flat rate fee structure — you pay for registration and password maintenance up front, and then per search. If you don't find anything, you don't pay that flat fee. You can get to IntelNet via Data Access, or Austpac, or Dialcom. You can get to IntelNet via Discovery, or via Vanguard. If you go via Dialcom you don't pay the flat fee nor registration fees, but you do pay a connect hour price of \$6 per minute. If you are a casual user, or just want to try it before you decide to register, you could do it through Dialcom. Of course, if you are an Ilanet user you can also do it, because Ilanet is part of the Dialcom network.

Which brings me to PowerSearch. One of IntelNet's newest features is a common

command language. Not quite the same approach as menu-driven searching, and it does require some skills. OTC are just testing it in the Australian market, and so have made it available to library users through Ilanet.

**DISCOVERY** is Telecom's national videotex service. Discovery 40 is not based on ASCII, but on videotex software. It is graphics oriented rather than textual, based on 40-column width. Discovery 80 is the new ASCII option — 80 column width. Discovery has interactive shopping, information services, and provides a gateway to IntelNet. It is said to have 30,000 customers.

**KEYLINK** — Keylink is the name for Telecom's electronic mail service. Once upon a time, Keylink referred to both Telecom's electronic mail (then known as Telememo) and OTC's electronic mail service (then known as Minerva). They changed to Keylink T (for Telememo) and Keylink D (for Dialcom). This joint venture did not last terribly long, and Telecom got to keep the name Keylink, which it now uses for its electronic mail.

**iLINK** — this is a Canadian-developed software package which Telecom bought a year or two ago. It is a gatewaying software which allows service providers to link together a number of disparate sources in one front-end menu for their customers. It is used for LINK, see next.

**LINK** — this is the Lawyer's Information Network operated by the Law Institute of Victoria. It uses the iLINK software described above. It provides a wide range of services, electronic communications, government services, Law Institute and Law Society Information, legal and general information services (gateways to databases on Australis, Ausinet, Ozline, Information Express, Dunsprint) and much more.

**AARNET** — this is the Australian Academic and Research Network which will provide academic and research institutions with a variety of options — electronic mail, information resources, access to supercomputer resources, and collaboration with other academic networks around the world. It is currently in pilot testing in Australia.

**ISDN** is a generic term, like EDI (which follows). It stands for Integrated Services Digital Network. Our telephone network now works with waves, for voice transmission. That's why we have to have modems, to change those wave transmissions to digital ones, so our computers can understand them. With ISDN, you will be able to plug your computer directly into the telephone network, because the signals will now be transmitted digitally, not analog (waves). For instance, homes and offices of the future could use ISDN to operate telephone, video, fax and computer

communications simultaneously. What it all really means, in terms of applications, is too soon to tell. What it means for modem manufacturers is also difficult to tell.

**EDI** is another generic term, standing for Electronic Data Interchange. Isn't that what all online searching and electronic mail is all about? No, EDI is rather more specific than that. An example of EDI is the EXIT system, facilitating the lodgement of documents with the Australian Customs for exported goods. A better name for it might be electronic document interchange, as it is more about documentation than it is about data in the more general sense.

**OTC**, as one of the major players in the information industry, has contributed lots of new names to the information and communications industry with its joint ventures and subsidiary companies. Here are three of them:

**TELEPOWER** — this is the name of joint venture between Computer Power Group and OTC to offer consultancy and network management services to help companies to more effectively integrate their telecommunications and computer systems. They recently won a major tender to provide telecommunications services to the NSW State Government.

**NETWORK INNOVATIONS** — the joint venture between OTC and British Telecom, established to manage OTC Dialcom (once Minerva, once Keylink D). OTC is the major shareholder.

**TRANSCOM** — (Transport Communications Australia Pty. Ltd.) is a wholly owned subsidiary of OTC. It aims to provide software and hardware solutions for OTC's Australian customs EXIT service, itself an EDI service.

Are you all clear on those names now? Don't worry about committing them all to memory, they are all likely to change in the next year or two. It certainly makes names like Ferntree easier to remember! While gateways and linking services might make it more convenient to market online services, it certainly makes it difficult to weigh up all the different possibilities and choose the best path for you.

