

UNITED NATIONS OPTICAL DISK SYSTEM

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* 4,860 Users *

- U. N. parliamentary documentation in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Chinese since 1993
- Resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council since 1946, in all official languages
- Some official records of the four main bodies since 1946 in all official languages
- Administrative issuances of the Secretariat

* 360,000 Documents *

- Available online 24 hours a day, seven days a week

The figures above clearly show that the ODS's popularity grew dramatically after users were able to access ODS via the Internet in 1997. 580 users from Permanent Missions and governments representing 142 Member States have requested passwords to access the ODS. 214 of these users access the ODS from their capitals via the Internet.

UNDP's field offices, UN Information Centres and Information Services around the globe, United Nations organizations and specialized agencies have all found access to ODS via the Internet a practical and beneficial solution to obtain UN documents in a timely manner and selectively, i.e. only when needed.

Now two ODS Internet sites

Since April 1998, a second ODS web site is accessible on the Internet at the United Nations Office at Geneva. The two ODS sites are "mirrored" sites, which means that the coverage and functionality of both sites is exactly the same. Due to the 6 hour time difference between Geneva and New York, Vienna and Geneva documents are sent to the New York ODS over night, and are thus available on the New York web site the next morning. New York documents released at 7.30 a.m. in New York will be available on the Geneva site with a 12 hour delay. The web sites can be found on the Internet under www.ods.un.org for New York and

under www.undocs.unog.ch for the optical disk platters.
Geneva.

New ODS search and retrieval user interface

A brand new and very user-friendly search interface is in development for users accessing the ODS with an Internet browser. The interface was designed under the leadership of the Library and Publications Division of the Office of Communications and Public Information. The design took into account many comments and suggestions obtained from users and Internet professionals. The new screens are scheduled to be available to users at the end of August 1998.

No more service interruption for back-ups

The ODS is now scheduled to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week without the previous one-hour daily interruption for the back-up of databases. This enhanced service became possible when the ODS facilities manager designed a special cache server for the daily production of documents from New York, Geneva and Vienna, and changed the procedures for running back-ups of

Replacement of the ODS ISDN gateway

The original ISDN connection to the ODS consisted of proprietary ISDN gateways at the central sites and special OST ISDN modem cards as well as remote client software on the PC of the remote user. With the advances of Internet and ISDN, this solution will now be replaced by Internet browser software on the remote PC. A standard ISDN board or a mini-router will replace the OST ISDN modem card, and the central gateways will be replaced by an access server in front of a firewall. This replacement will take place during the remainder of 1998 and into 1999. This option allows Permanent Missions to have a dedicated, fast (up to 128 kbps), direct link to the ODS without going through the public Internet.

UNIDO's documents on ODS

After the United Nations Office at Vienna started to input its daily documents into the ODS in April 1997, UNIDO's documents are being archived now also daily for general retrieval.

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UNDP and UNICEF documents have been input into ODS since 1993. Most UN organizations which have their documents processed by the UN Office at Geneva, have their documents available on ODS as well.

ACC decision on access for Specialized Agencies

A decision by ACC on arranging for limited free access to ODS for all specialized agencies of the UN System is expected any moment. There is also a report of the Secretary General on "Access to the optical disk system" with the document symbol A/52/803. This document contains the proposed sales policy for re-imbursable access to ODS as requested by the General Assembly last year.

ODS/CD-ROM

A first CD-ROM prototype has been produced. The CD-ROM contains all Security Council documents from 1993 to the end of 1996 including presidential statements and verbatim records. This first CD-ROM is in English. A prototype in French will be ready this summer. The CD-ROMs are intended to supplement

the online ODS by distributing the documents and search database of ODS world-wide on this popular and inexpensive medium. Distribution modalities for the ODS/ROM products still need to be determined by the Secretariat.

ODS/Internet speed improvements

Documents are transmitted much faster through the firewall on the security segment of the network. Document retrieval and downloading speeds were improved by a factor of ten after upgrading the firewall and the security network segment which lie between the ODS and the Internet.

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In order for ODS not to become a victim of its success, plans have been prepared to invest in the system, to expand its capacity and to upgrade its technological architecture as soon as possible.

A project outline has been prepared to upgrade the ODS and to ensure its technical and functional viability for the next five to seven years. The ODS is now 7 years old and the PC workstations

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which were in use when ODS became fully operational 6 years ago, have all been replaced by more modern and more powerful PC's. It is obvious that the technological architecture used for ODS needs to be upgraded. At the same time, the capacity of the system must be expanded to serve more users world-wide and to accomodate a wider range of document collections and publications. Furthermore, in response to a General Assembly resolution from last year, the

ODS must also provide uniform, user-friendly search and retrieval interfaces on the Internet in all six official languages of the Organization. It is hoped that work on this important project can start in this budget biennium. Failing that, a request for funds will be made in the proposed budget for 2000-2001.

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