

SCIENTISTS DON'T NEED HOT-LINES! WHAT THEN?

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Sharing exchanging and distribution of information, knowledge and experience is an essential part of the way of life of Scientists. Scientific research and development all over the world achieve considerable progress due to the ability of the scientists to work together in one homogenous community irrespective of their geographical separation. In the past traditional means of exchange of ideas such as the printed texts have been used. Today owing to the scale of scientific research, such traditional means have not proved to be effective.

This doesn't mean that the scientists need hot-lines to be in touch with each other. What is needed then is an effective, simple yet reliable mechanism to bring the scientists world over together into one working community.

Computer networking and data communications have provided the necessary infrastructure for this and today both the developed as well as the developing countries, with the notable exception of Sri Lanka, have invested heavily in this. As a result world wide computer networks have sprung up providing complete connectivity for computer data communications. Electronic mail (e-mail) provides connectivity for informal messaging and interchange of views and ideas.

This paper describes for the purpose of bringing to the notice of the wider scientific community in Sri Lanka, the pioneering development efforts in setting up of an e-mail network within the Universities, PG Institutes, Research Centres and Documentation Centres in Sri Lanka in order to provide both local and international connectivity. The initial stages of the project have been funded by the UGC, CINTEC and the University of Moratuwa.

A more complete treatment of the importance of Wide Area Computer Networking and how they could contribute to the national socio-economic development of Sri Lanka is found in references [INDU 84, INDU 88, INDU 89, INDU 89, INDU 91, INDU 91].