

Infrastructure. This notice is part of the work of the Information Policy Committee of the Information Infrastructure Task Force. To facilitate public input, OMB, along with the Commerce Department's National Technical Information Service (NTIS) and National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the National Performance Review (NPR), and assistance from the US Government Printing Office, will host a nationwide electronic open meeting to discuss a number of questions related to this topic.

**DATES:** An electronic open meeting will be held from May 1 to 14, 1995. Those who wish to may submit written comments no later than May 31, 1995.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR TO SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS CONTACT:** *To Submit Written Comments send to:* Information Policy and Technology Branch, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Room 10236, New Executive Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20503.

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#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

The world has entered the age of electronic information. We are present at the creation of a Global Information Infrastructure that will build on what aviation and communications have already done to shrink the world into ever more interdependent communities. Our U.S. National Information Infrastructure (NII) will in many ways be the paradigm upon which the global infrastructure is modeled.

The NII is a combination of facilities, services, and people that will allow all Americans to send and receive information when and where they want it at an affordable cost. The NII includes the physical facilities used to transmit, store, process, and display voice, data, and images. It includes software and services, including security services, that will integrate and interconnect these physical components through the efforts of a wide variety of private sector providers. It includes vast quantities of information that exist today in government agencies and the valuable information produced every day in the private sector. Finally, it includes all Americans, but especially the people who create information, develop applications, information products and services, construct facilities, and train others to tap the NII's potential.

The Federal government should be in step with the change from paper to

electronic information. The U.S. government is the world's largest creator, collector, user, and disseminator of information. Sound scientific research, the public health and safety, and the delivery of benefits and services are a few of the national priorities that depend on Federal information systems.

The Federal government, then, should act as a facilitator and catalyst to the development of the NII. It should help create a legal and policy framework that allows the information highway to develop in a manner consistent with consumer choice, universal service, and security and privacy protections. It should also be a model user—creating a government that works better and costs less by using technology to improve information dissemination and service delivery.

For the NII to succeed, it must be built upon a partnership of business, labor, academia, the public, and government that is committed to deployment of an advanced, rapid, powerful infrastructure accessible and accountable to all Americans. The Administration has established the Information Infrastructure Task Force (ITTF) to coordinate the Administration's efforts to formulate forward-looking telecommunications and information policy. Its goals are set forth in the Agenda for Action, published on September 15, 1993.

One of the fundamental tenets of the Administration's philosophy is that government information is a public asset and a valuable national resource. The Federal government should make information available to the public on timely and equitable terms. It is also necessary to foster the existing diversity of information sources, in which the private sector, along with State and local governments, libraries, and other entities, are significant partners. On the one hand, this means that the government should not expend public resources filling needs which have already been met by others in the public or private sector. On the other, it means that the Federal government should actively disseminate its information at the cost of dissemination and not attempt to exert copyright-like controls or other restrictive practices on government information. These guiding principles are set forth in OMB Circular A-130, most recently republished in the **Federal Register** on July 25, 1994. (59 FR 26906).

Toward those goals, the recent revisions to the Office of Management and Budget Circular A-130 have increasingly focused on the exchange of information with the public and the

promotion of agency investments in technologies that improve service delivery to the public. On December 7, 1994, OMB Bulletin 95-01 unveiled the Government Information Locator Service (GILS)—the "virtual card catalog" called for in the Agenda for Action. This first phase of GILS is a step toward improving the infrastructure for information and service delivery to the public.

Even before GILS, a number of Federal agencies, such as the Department of Commerce's "NTIS FedWorld" and the Government Printing Office's "GPO Access" systems, were using dial-up electronic bulletin boards and connections to the Internet. The GILS initiative then is an effort to stimulate the expanded use of electronic access and dissemination practices in a more coordinated manner.

Beyond GILS, questions arise as to other appropriate courses of action for the near and far term. Generally, how should Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments interact with industry, the public interest and library communities, academia, and the general public on the National Information Infrastructure? More specifically, how can the delivery of services to the public be enhanced by electronic means? What services should they be, and how can they be delivered cost effectively and within overall budgetary constraints? What methods are best suited to further disseminate government information to the public, collect information from the public, and reduce burden while maximizing efficiency? In what ways can the interaction between agencies of the Federal government, or between agencies at the Federal, state and local levels be improved? How can we best encourage partnerships among governmental entities at all levels with private sector entities to ensure a diversity of information sources, providers and facilitators? Finally, what are the priorities? These topics are elucidated further below for discussion in the electronic open meeting.

Five relevant topic areas have been identified:

- Services—from emergency help to health care,
- Benefits—from social security and food stamps to small business grants,
- Information—from declassified secrets and travel aids to satellite weather maps,
- Participatory Democracy—improving everyone's opportunity to participate in rulemaking and other governmental decisions,
- Technology—how the technical portion of electronic government will work.