

# FEDIX ON-LINE INFORMATION SERVICE

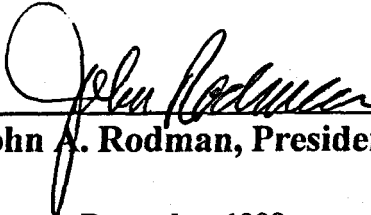
Implementation of a Government-Wide On-Line  
Research and Educational Opportunity Information  
Initiative for the Education Community

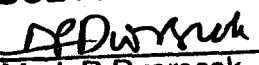
Final Report

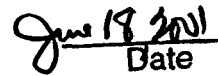
for

DOE Cooperative Agreement DE-FC05-89ER75527

Submitted by:

  
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DOE Patent Clearance Granted  
  
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This is the final report for the Department of Energy (DOE) funded Cooperative Agreement DE-FC02-89ER75527, "FEDIX: Implementation of Implementation of a Government-Wide On-Line Research and Educational Opportunity Information Initiative for the Education Community". The report summarizes the significant accomplishments attained throughout the ten-year project in support of the original objectives of the cooperative agreement application.

In a 1988 Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU) study, only one of twenty colleges and universities surveyed ranked the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) as being in the top five government agencies that adequately communicated with their customers. Based on the results of the study that showed a need from educators for easy access to accurate and timely information regarding federal agency opportunity information, a grant was awarded by the Department of Energy to Federal Information Exchange, Inc. (now *Research and Management Systems, Inc.*) to develop, test and implement FEDIX, an on-line information and retrieval system to provide information about the Government's research, development, and education programs at no cost to colleges and universities, while providing savings to the agency. The initial FEDIX system included DOE programs at DOE Headquarters, Argonne, Brookhaven, Lawrence Berkeley, Oak Ridge and Pacific Northwest Laboratories. Within the first year of operation, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Office of Naval Research (ONR), interested in DOE's approach, became the first additional agencies to join the FEDIX service. Over the years, other agencies also joined:

- Department of Energy
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Education
- Office of Naval Research
- Air Force Office of Scientific Research
- Department of Transportation/Federal Aviation Administration
- National Institutes of Health
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
- National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
- National Cancer Institute
- National Institute of Dental Research
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Services

As a result of the expansive partnering in the on-line service under the leadership of DOE, FEDIX has become the key entity in the U.S. to bridge the research and educational programs information gap between government and academia. Only six years after its creation, in the Summer of 1995, another Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU) survey showed that FEDIX was rated as "the most common on-line database used by research administration offices" at colleges and universities.

As designed, the FEDIX system is easy to use, available at no cost to the end-user, accessible by anyone using a computer, and available 24 hours per day, seven days a week. The FEDIX staff works with designated contact persons at each participating agency to enhance the quality and availability of information and services provided by the agencies to the academic community. On a daily basis, updated research and education program descriptions are collected, sorted, abstracted and indexed with appropriate keywords. Current funding announcements from the *Commerce Business Daily*, *Federal Register*, agency newsletters and other publications are continuously uploaded to the system to ensure the most accurate and current data available. Information offered to users includes:

- proposal solicitations
- program descriptions
- contact information about program managers
- excess research and computer equipment
- proposal guidelines and budget forms
- job vacancy announcements
- other information of interest to the higher education community

To give the reader a complete understanding of the FEDIX effort over the last five years since our Annual Report in 1994, enclosed as *Exhibit (1)* is a copy of each Progress Report.

In order to increase the visibility of the system within the federal government as well as the educational community, and in an effort to increase the user base and overall support for the system, key staff members continuously conduct outreach activities (to include attendance at meetings, conferences, exhibits and workshops), user support and training, customer satisfaction evaluations, status reports, and system usage profiles. A sample listing of numerous meetings attended annually may be found in *Exhibit (2)*.

Constant evaluation of the system is crucial to the success of FEDIX in order to assess usage patterns, user satisfaction levels and reveal ways to improve delivery of federal opportunity information to the higher education community. User satisfaction surveys were administered in coordination with independent survey analysts in 1992, 1993, 1996 and 1998. In each case the results demonstrated an overwhelming positive response by the users. Results can be reviewed in *Exhibit (3)*.

The increase in usage of the system since its beginning is a clear reflection of its continuous growth: from 15,000 accesses recorded in 1991 to over half a million by August 1999. See the FEDIX usage chart in *Exhibit (4)*.

In March 1996, the *FEDIX Opportunity Alert!* (FOA) service was added to the system. It is a free e-mail service that enables users to register on FEDIX, select the keywords that identify their area(s) of interest and automatically begin receiving email announcements on research and education funding opportunities within their interest area. The system is based on the "Grants Keyword Thesaurus", which is a standardized set of keywords used nationwide for federal

research administration. Since March '96, FOA has increased its subscriber base to more than 70,000 registered users and more than 30 million Opportunity alert emails have been sent. See the FOA subscriber chart in *Exhibit (5)*.

As further testimony to its success, FEDIX's has also received numerous forms of public recognition, among them several web site awards including:

- Point Survey's Top 5% Award
- Magellan 4 Star Site
- Majon's Web Select Award
- LookSmart Editor's Choice Award
- Net Guide Gold Site Award
- USA Today Hot Site Award

FEDIX was also cited in the Washington Post as one of nine primary sources of Federal government online consumer information. In addition, it has been referred to by the Chronicle of Higher Education, the National Council of University Research Administrators Newsletter, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Newsletter and the National Institutes of Health Record.

Launched at the dawn of the Internet era, FEDIX has remained at the forefront of change in the electronic communications industry. The FEDIX system is an evolving set of programs and databases that is constantly being upgraded in order to provide users with the quickest and most convenient access to information possible and streamline management and reporting tasks to reduce operating costs. Improvements and upgrades to web page designs throughout the system over the past ten years have created greater accessibility, increased performance, ease of maintenance, improved connectivity and file transfer, as well as better search and maintenance capabilities. Sample web pages of various agencies are found in *Exhibit (6)*.

Upgrades to hardware have been crucial to keep pace with the rapidly expanding user base and increased volume of data stored and processed in the FEDIX system. From its early development to the present, the technical staff have make every effort to provide the necessary hardware to support and operate the expanding FEDIX system capability. FEDIX now has state-of-the-art technology to run the interactive, high-performance web server applications. This has enhanced functionality and flexibility.

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\* Note: Federal Information Exchange, Inc. has no unobligated funds at the end of the budget period.