



NMFRC News

<http://cai.eclipse.net/home2.htm>

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The Resource Center Pilot Program

The National Metal Finishing Resource Center is a one-stop, electronically linked source for all the commercial, technical and regulatory information metal finishers need on an occasional or regular basis. The Center has databases containing thousands of technical articles, reports and full text regulations; databases for finding vendors of equipment, supplies and services; on-line conferences; and more. It is accessed through the World Wide Web on the Internet.

Join the Pilot Program

The Resource Center is conducting a pilot program that will last for 6 to 12 months. The purpose of the pilot program is to acquire feedback from users while expanding the capabilities of the Resource Center. The pilot program will assure that the Center is meeting the current and future information needs of the industry. All persons interested in the metal finishing industry are invited to participate and utilize all of the databases and features of the site. There is no cost associated with the pilot program. To join, point your browser to:

<http://cai.eclipse.net>

To access the Resource Center homepage, use Netscape version 2.0 or higher, or an equivalent browser. If you are experiencing Internet problems, consult the July NMFRC News column for likely solutions. When you reach the homepage, click on "New Users Start Here" to obtain a user ID and pass code.

Pilot Program Status

The program was initiated in April 1996 with a group of 25 users. By mid-June, the pilot group expanded to

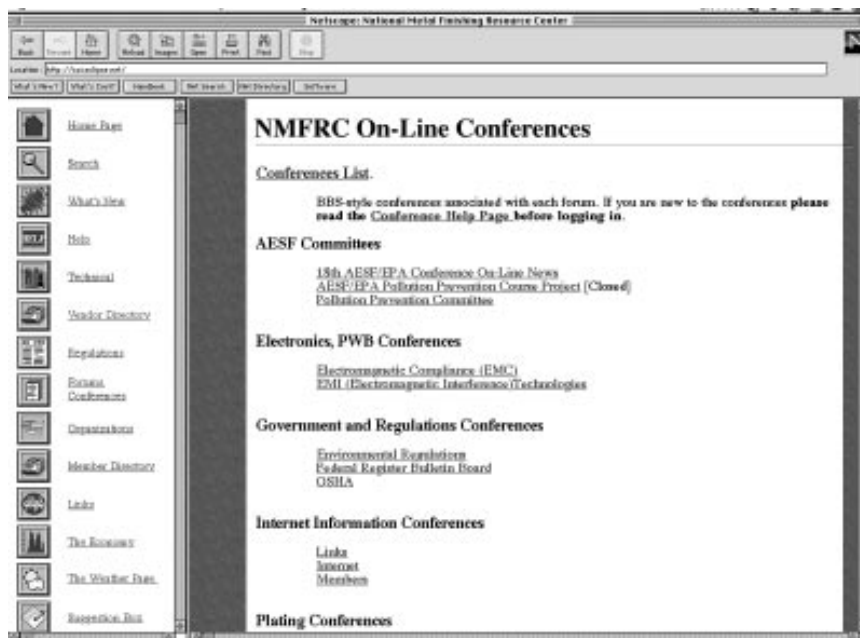


Fig. 1—On-line conference topics.



George Cushnie presented demonstrations on accessing the NMFRC during SUR/FIN '96—Cleveland.

nearly 200 people and more are added everyday. The goal is to have 1,000 or more pilot users by the end of the year. At this level of participation, there will be an excellent cross-section of the metal finishing industry using the databases and interfacing with one another in on-line conferences. Higher participation levels increase the knowledge base of the Resource Center and improve the value of the site for everyone involved.

Among the pilot users are people associated with jobshops, captive shops, suppliers, engineering companies, trade associations, federal and state environmental agencies, and other government agencies.

The Most Popular Feature
During the very early stages of the pilot program, the most popular features of the Website were the technical information database and regulatory database. Although these areas of the site remain very active, the on-line conferences have become the most popular feature. Conferences can be established for any metal finishing topic or any relevant topic (Fig. 1). For example, popular conferences include: Hard chromium plating, anodizing, used plating equipment, wastewater treatment, the *Federal Register Review*, and environmental regulations. Conferences are established by requests from users. New conferences can be opened immediately.

The on-line conferences are an excellent method of interfacing with hundreds of knowledgeable industry people. The conferences are used mostly to announce important events that pertain to specific topics, to broadcast information about new technology, and to request help. As an example of the latter purpose, a plater experiencing deposition problems with a new process or base metal can type in a description of the problem and request other members to provide input. Chances are, because of the large number of users, someone will have a viable solution to the problem. Members type in their suggestions, which are electronically linked together, along with the original question. The final result is a string of organized responses.

With an on-line conference, people don't have to be simultaneously

Using Netscape with America On-Line (AOL)

Many Internet users subscribe to America On-Line and use the AOL browser when surfing the net. The AOL browser will not work at the Resource Center. To access the Resource Center using AOL, you must use Netscape 2.0 or higher or an equivalent browser. It is not difficult for AOL subscribers to acquire and use Netscape. Here are step-by-step instructions:

1. Download Netscape version 2.0 or greater by pointing your browser to: <http://home.netscape.com>. You will be hyper-linked to Netscape's home page where you will be given instructions on how to download Netscape and how to use "Setup to install Netscape" on your computer. It is a good idea to wait until you can close all other applications before attempting to install Netscape, so wait until the end of item 6 before actually installing.
2. After Netscape has been successfully downloaded, go back to the AOL Main Menu page and select the "Go To" pull-down menu from the menu bar across the top of the screen.
3. Select "Keyword" from the "Go To" pull-down menu.
4. In the "Keyword" search window, type in "winsock." This will take you to a page where you can get additional information about AOL's winsock.dll file and running Netscape under AOL.
5. Download AOL's winsock.dll file to a safe directory (not in your command path) such as C:\aol25\download. You will need to move it later.
6. Sign off of AOL.
7. You will now need to copy the new winsock.dll into an appropriate directory or folder.
 - For Windows 3.11 users, you need to copy the new winsock.dll into a directory that is in your command path. You can go to the DOS prompt and type "path" to see what directories are in your command path. Most users will have a directory in their path called c:\windows, which is the directory from which Windows is loaded. This is a good place for the new winsock.dll. Before you copy it into this or any other directory, though, check to see if there is an existing winsock.dll. If so, copy the existing winsock.dll file to something like winsock.old so that you can recover it if necessary. Also make sure that there aren't any other winsock.dll files in any of the other directories in the command path as these may cause conflicts.
 - Windows 95 users should be aware that there have been some problems running Netscape, and these are well-documented on AOL's winsock bulletin board. It appears that the key is to place the AOL winsock.dll file in the same folder or directory where Netscape resides.
8. At a minimum, you will need to restart Windows to use the new winsock.dll after you have copied it into the correct directory or folder. It's probably a better idea to simply reboot your computer.
9. When you sign on to AOL again, minimize the AOL window and find the Netscape icon in your Program Manager. Double click on the Netscape icon and you should be on your way!
10. Consult the AOL winsock bulletin board or seek technical support from AOL if you have any problems. Also, you can e-mail questions to Mark Eelman of the Resource Center (markeelm@eclipse.net).



Fig. 2—Directory of products and services.

connected to the Resource Center to interface with other users. Any questions or information that are posted in a conference are automatically entered in a conference database. When users enter the conference area of the Website, they are directed

to any new messages that have been posted since the last time they were connected. This feature prevents users from re-reading the entire contents of the conferences to find new material. Users can also go directly to specific

conferences and avoid any conference topics that are not of interest to them.

In addition to posting messages, conference users can add pictures to their messages, add hypertext links, or insert other features. For example, a plater can add a photograph of a piece of equipment that he is advertising in the "Used Equipment Conference." There are directions in the conference area that explain how to enhance messages using these techniques.

Other Popular Features

"Links" are another popular feature. Links refer to hypertext links that connect a user to another Internet Website. A links conference has been established where users can share their favorite links with other members. The Webmaster often adds these suggestions to the main menu and they become permanent links. Some of the more notable links include: On-line "yellow pages" that cover the entire country and can be searched for any topic, interactive street maps for most areas in the U.S. showing restaurants and points of interest, free sports and news sites with the latest scores and breaking stories, the *Thomas Register* (on-line, searchable, and free), and the U.S. Senate Homepage.

The Resource Center Products and Services Directory (Fig. 2) is new and already a popular feature. There are more than 250 companies listed in the directory that is searchable by product/service, keyword, or company name.

Other very popular areas of the Resource Center include the Member Directory (a searchable directory that allows you to directly e-mail a message to any Resource Center member), the Journal Library (recent, full text, fully graphical issues of industry journals such as *Plating & Surface Finishing*), and State/Local Links (just click on a state from the U.S. map and visit hundreds of state agencies and cities). **P&SF**

NMFRC Vendor Directory

The NMFRC Vendor Directory is a free directory containing more than 200 companies and 500 products and services commonly used by the metal finishing industry. To have your company listed in the National Metal Finishing Resource Center Vendor Directory (at no charge) contact George Cushnie at 703/264-0039.

Free Details: Circle 119 on postpaid reader service card.