Malamud noted that with his own computer server more than 108,000 files were transmitted using the anonymous File Transfer Protocol method of retrieving remote files to more than 1,300 host computers in at least 24 countries.

Tarjanne said the ITU is itself working on offering the standards after the ITU joins the Internet sometime in the future.

While organizations that had used the service had some complaints—diagrams weren't included, the files were defined by volume rather than by individual standard, and the communications connections didn't always work—the overall reaction to the news was disappointment.

"It had been a real breakthrough," said Richard deJadins, director of The GOSIP Institute, Silver Spring, Md. "The situation now is back to the case where standards are not open if you can't get hold of them, because they cost too much."

The standards will continue to be available through Dec. 31.
ITU Decision Turns Back the Clock

Pekka Tarjanne started his tenure as secretary-general of the International Telecommunication Union with high hopes, but has been forced to heed the overwhelming presence of the conservative, permanent bureaucracy that works in Geneva.

On Oct. 11, Dr. Tarjanne stepped onto a podium in Geneva, and, via a satellite link, made a historic announcement to the attendees at the Interop Fall '91 Conference. He was giving permission to post ITU standards, including the 19,000-page Blue Book, on the Internet for distribution at no charge.

By any measure, the experiment has been a great success. It started with a central server in Colorado, and four weeks later 21 other servers on four continents contained a complete copy of the data and were serving hundreds of thousands of documents to users all over the world.

The Colorado server was named after Bruno, a Dominican priest in the Middle Ages who revealed the closely guarded secrets of Greek memory to the world and was later executed for heresy. The Bruno server, donated by Sun Microsystems Inc., is about to meet a similar fate.

After a mere two months in operation, I got a letter from the ITU telling me that it was terminating the experiment Dec. 31.

The reason for this abrupt reversal in policy is a lesson in bureaucratic politics. Tarjanne wanted to make the ITU more relevant to the world, and what better way than making its work available to an internetwork of 4 million people, growing at 15 percent to 20 percent per month?

The bureaucracy fought this move every step of the way. They felt threatened. If we gave away the standards, there would be fewer jobs at the ITU. There would be less control over distribution and more pressure to start responding to the realities of engineering in the rest of the world.

Although Dr. Tarjanne gave permission to start in June, it took several more months before we could get the data from the education ITU staff. Even then half the data was finished, and much of the conversion of the documents was done by the internal proprietary ITU format was not put on-line to an open group of engineers. This was too much for the ITU bureaucracy and they swung into high gear, ultimately giving the experiment Dec. 31.

Yet, in a mere 20 days, the conversion was finished, and much of the remaining 4 million pages was gone. The ITU's move revealed the problem of bureaucracy and the need for a more flexible approach.