

Airline tariff firm taps ITA Software technology

BY DENNIS SCHAAL

WASHINGTON — Another airline organization is scrapping some of its mainframe technology for scalable PCs.

The Airline Tariff Publishing Co., a privately held firm based

Mass., to license ITA's new international fare construction technology to more efficiently provide the airlines with unpublished — yet public — international fares.

The airlines use this information as an analysis tool in

Using new search algorithms and based on a string of PC servers tied together in parallel-processing mode, ITA technology provides faster, more comprehensive searches than the mainframe-based systems still used by the CRSs.

In practice, the CRSs have endorsed ITA's role, as well. Amadeus has an equity stake in ITA, and the software company recently signed a pact with Worldspan to couple the ITA fare-search technology with booking capabilities.

Mike Ferrier, ATPCO's president and chief executive officer, said the ITA deal will enable its airline customers to more efficiently and economically use this ATPCO-supplied international fare data.

Some 150 million fares, generated from information provided by airlines worldwide, are used to construct these international fares.

The type of fare information involved, Ferrier said, might involve a New York-Frankfurt-Vienna routing.

If the New York-Frankfurt segment had a published fare, and the Frankfurt-Vienna segment was unpublished, then ATPCO would use the ITA technology to supply the airlines with the combined fare.

ATPCO already distributes

international fare construction data, but it uses a so-called legacy system based on Cobol, an older mainframe-based language that's not as agile as newer, PC-based systems.

The volume of data involved is massive: ATPCO expects to combine and distribute 900 million fares of this type this year.

"We've shown it can be done incredibly quickly and efficiently on small computers," said ITA founder and chief executive officer Jeremy Wertheimer, noting that the technology can perform "lots of kinds of computations."

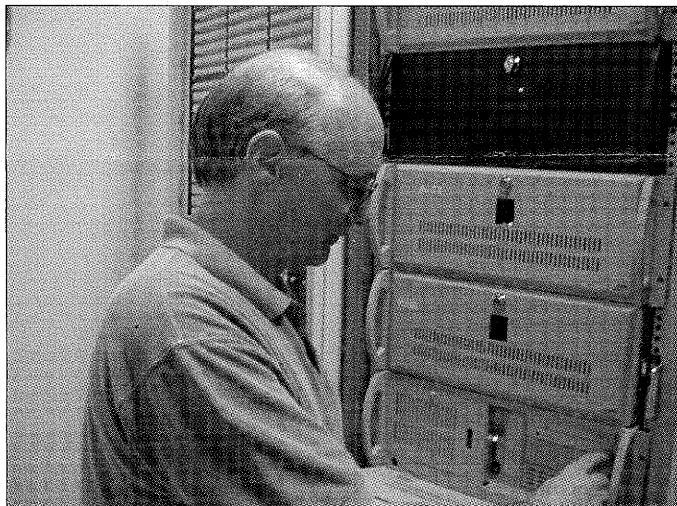
For example, an airline might use the data to examine only one market — saving the computational resources inherent in the current system, which only can provide a broader look. "An airline might

say: 'I only care about the routes I fly,'" Wertheimer said.

ITA's international fare construction technology, which is its foray into international fares, is not part of the fare-search product licensed to Orbitz and others, although it's based on the same "fast-math algorithms," an ITA spokeswoman said.

ATPCO does not do international fare construction for the CRSs, which have their own systems for combining the same information, Ferrier said.

The tariff organization, meanwhile, hopes to start using the ITA technology in the first half of 2001 after a contract is signed. Both Ferrier and Wertheimer concurred that the licensing agreement between the two companies is "a done deal."



Bruce Walton, ITA Software's chief systems administrator, checks out a rack of servers that runs the company's beta site.

here that is owned by 27 airlines, is going to an outside technology supplier for the first time to support ATPCO's airline fare and rule distribution system.

ATPCO has an agreement in principle with ITA Software, headquartered in Cambridge,

their decision-support areas.

ITA is best known for its role in supplying Orbitz, the airline-owned travel site slated to debut next summer, with innovative fare-search technology that is widely seen as outstripping the corresponding search technology used by the CRSs.