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R-range

PRESS CUTTINGS

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Office data link with video set

By Kenneth Owen
Technology Editor

A new, integrated office information system was demonstrated in London yesterday by Redfons Computers, which claims to be the second largest British-owned computer manufacturer.

The system provides data processing, word processing and information dissemination, using a range of terminals and attachments which include videodata colour television sets and terminal pads which can accept input in hand-printed form.

Mr Michael Aldrich, managing director, said the system was unique in basic version costs about £30,000.

Known as the R1800 30 Compact Office System, the computer-based equipment could become the basic building-block for two new types of business, Mr Aldrich suggested.

The first of these was that of information service brokers, who would install a system and provide connections for users at "intelligent" colour television sets. Users would be able to place orders for goods, obtain information and undertake programmed learning courses.

The second new business was that of "the "neighbourhood computer utility" which would provide an accounting and information processing service for small traders and for professional and business people.

This local utility concept represented a new approach to the fast-growing computer-using market. Subscribers would be able to dial their local office directly from their televisions, and the data could then be transmitted and retrieved. Hard reports could be requested and printed from the television.

The new system will be at Redfon's plants at Ely, Haven and Crawley, Sussex.

Viewdata access to IBM

VIEWDATA users will be able to access an IBM mainframe in 3270 mode using an office system as a transparent converter.

That is the most striking feature of the second model in Redfon's R1800 range of office systems (CW, March 27) which model has now been unveiled as the small-scale R1800/30.

A new software facility called 3270 Viewdata Pass Through is part of the R1800/30's strong emphasis on viewdata, to be used for management information, ordering by sales staff and outside agencies and the like. A standard Prestel set can be used to access the Redfon machine and then call for information which looks to be on a separate IBM system. The mainframe will be called up automatically using standard IBM protocols, and the user will be unaware that this is happening.

Otherwise, the R1800/30 is intended mainly for such work as data entry, particularly using handprint terminals. Four viewdata ports, four handprint ports, and eight VDU ports are available, with up to 20 megabytes of storage. The programming language is similar to Cobol.

Word processing is not being emphasised, although text editing is available.

Redfon scales down

Redfon Computers has released details of the second model in its R1800 series of office systems.

As with the first, the most interesting feature is the viewdata facility. Called Viewdata Pass Through, new software enables a colour television to connect through the R1800/30 processor to an IBM mainframe, operating in interactive IBM 3270 mode. This allows IBM users to front-end existing 3270 systems with the Redfon machine, which is completely transparent to the user. Although this is only offered for IBM systems at present, Redfon has other mainframes in mind.

On the hardware side, the R1800/30 uses the same R1400 processor as the 1800/50 and has 96k bytes of main memory and up to 20M bytes of data/text storage.

Four ports are provided for Redfon's Viewdata plus interactive televisions, and four Writeway hand-print terminals can be connected.

The 1800/30 is software-compatible with 1800/50, and two additional software systems have been released.

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Redifon launches viewdata system

Redifon has launched a new office system that will bring viewdata to IBM users.

The 1800/30 Compact Office System offers a full text and data processing facility but is characterised by the emphasis on interactive viewdata terminals. It is, in fact, the younger sister to the 1800/50 launched earlier this year. It costs around £30,000 for the hardware which includes the R14000 16 bit processor with 96K main memory, 20 megabytes of disc and up to twelve ports. To these the user can attach suitably adapted television sets, ordinary CRTs or hand-print terminals.

The software which costs £3,000 includes the 3270 Viewdata Pass Through which enables the Redifon system to access an IBM mainframe as though it were a 3270.

Redifon is hoping to attract users in the services industries who can use the cheap viewdata facility to keep customers and agents informed and to allow them to do direct ordering and even message sending.

Extract from
Commerce International, London

Rivals required

MORE competition in the private viewdata field has been called for by Redifon Computers managing director Michael Aldrich.

Commenting on the company's latest viewdata and office system developments, Aldrich told EWP: "What we at Redifon need are some competitors so that the market can be made more rapidly aware of viewdata's considerable potential in an aid to business efficiency, and we can sell more systems.

"At the moment, the 'Viewdata Plus' package we have developed for our R1800 Redifon Office Revolution Series computer systems is unique in that it is the only one available offering full real-time updating, real-time computation, plus data management multi-level indices, and multiple-level access security as well as Prestel compatibility," he explained.

At the launch, Redifon announced a second model in the 1800 Series, the R1800/30 Compact Office System, and a version of Viewdata Plus for IBM mainframe users called 3270 Viewdata Pass Through.

"The R1800/30 is a compact, multi-purpose, multi-functional office computer that handles data processing, data entry, distributed processing, text processing, network interface and information dissemination at low cost." Aldrich said. "A four-port configuration with Viewdata Plus, 10 Mbytes of disk storage and a conventional VDU for data and test processing costs around £30,000."

The new system can be connected to IBM 3100 or Burroughs processors for both interactive and batch processing. Its cost-performance ratio enables it to compete directly with single-function systems and, in its distributed data-processing role, the R1800/30 will compete directly with the IBM 8100 at up to 30 percent lower acquisition cost," Aldrich claimed. Redifon has already received "several orders" from banks, building societies and financial institutions. The Crawley firm is also supplying Ireland's first private viewdata system, the customer being Phoneline Ltd, of Dublin.

Extract from
Engineering Today, London

Redifon puts its own programme on TV

Do not adjust your set.

From the people who brought us Redifon comes an office computer system that uses a colour television receiver as the main means of viewing information. Redifon Computers says the new system can display 20,000 pages of business information, messages, puzzles and simple graphics. The messages can be sent from one set to another by cable to speed the flow of information around a group of different users.

Before information comes out, some has to be put in. The system uses a device which simplifies this process. Standard forms - for ordering goods, for example - are placed over a "Writeaway" pad and filled in by hand. A touch sensitive surface senses the characters and transmits them to the computer for action.

The system, designated R1800/30, consists of a central processor - with 96,000 bytes of memory - driving receivers. Writeaway terminals and conventional terminals. Up to 12 devices can be fitted to one system; the four-port version costs £30,000. As well as handling information, the system can work as a data processor and can be linked to other larger computer systems.
Chain Ink, no brain
Drake builds data on CMC

Construction industry contracting firm Drake & Scull Engineering has ordered a $1.545 million Computer Machinery Corp. (CMC) multiple processor keying system for installation at its Salisbury headquarters next month.

Controlling five CMC processing terminals and four keystations, the equipment will process Drake and Scull's bought ledger and invoice run, as well as providing the mainframe, a Univac 9300, with data entry facilities.

Currently, all this work is handled by the mainframe. The Wiltshire firm, which chose the equipment over Redifon, stressed the importance of the keying system's design architecture in making the final decision.

Flight simulators

After the first half in which profits fell by 10% to £15.3m, the company is expected to perform much better in the second half through the delivery of orders for flight simulators and computers. But the high stock interest charge of 7.5% last year has depressed profit forecasts. A halving of the stock interest charge to 3.5% per cent is expected for 1980.