

News from

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R-range

P R E S S C U T T I N G S

July 1980

Checking on the check-outs

If Mike Aldrich is to be believed, the days of the supermarket are numbered. He foresees a future when housewives will do the week's shopping from the comfort of an armchair, using a hand-held push-button keypad to order electronically items displayed on their television screen at home.

Aldrich is Managing Director of Redifon Computers, part of the Redifusion group, which this week unveiled a versatile new data-processing and information system. Like the Post Office's Prestel service, it is based on viewdata technology, which in effect turns a television set into a terminal which can "talk to" a central computer.

The system, called the R1800/30, will sell for about £30,000. That may sound steep, but Redifon claims that it performs as well as an IBM system (costing up to 50 per cent more). It is also simple to use—literally child's play, Redifon says that it tried it out on a ten-year-old and he mastered it in minutes.

The company hopes that its simplicity of operation will appeal to many people who have never dealt with a computer before. It expects to sell it initially to small businesses, particularly in the distribution trade, for which it can perform tasks like order booking, stock control, payrolls and general accounting.

All these functions can, of course, be carried out by a micro-computer costing only a few thousand pounds. But the R1800/30 is more versatile because it also allows users to communicate at a distance. Redifon thinks that this feature will open up a much bigger market.

According to Aldrich, the system could stimulate the growth of cheap computer services. A local merchant or businessman with a suitably modified television set in his office could use it to transmit data on his accounts or tax returns to a computer "bureau" where they would be processed and the results sent back to him. For about £300 Redifon will supply a small printer to make a permanent record of the screen display.

It may be a while, though, before reality catches up with Aldrich's vision. The televisions used in the system have to be specially equipped for viewdata, and Aldrich reckons that at least 500 of them would have to be installed in a community for his electronic warehouse scheme to be commercially worthwhile. But viewdata has cost twice as much as ordinary colour televisions, and so far less than 5,000 have been installed nationwide.

Office data link with video set

By Kenneth Owen
Technology Editor

A new, integrated office information system was demonstrated in London yesterday by Redifon 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 viewdata colour television sets and terminal pads which can accept input in hand-printed form.

Mr. Michael Aldrich, managing director, said the system was unique. A 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 connexions for users of "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 first-time computer-using market. Subscribers would be able to dial their local utility directly from their television data could then be entered, accessed and retrieved; hard reports could be requested printed from the television.

The new system will be at Redifon's plants at Ithaca 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 Redifon'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 agents, and the like. A standard Prestel set can be used to access the Redifon machine and then call for information which happens 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.

Extract from

New Electronics, London

22 JUL 1980

Redifon scales down

Redifon 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 Redifon machine, which is completely transparent to the user. Although this is only offered for IBM systems at

present, Redifon has other mainframes in mind.

On the hardware side, the R1800/30 uses the same R4000 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 Redifon's Viewdata plus interactive televisions, and four Writaway hand-print terminals can be connected.

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

For further information circle 393

Redifon launches viewdata system

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

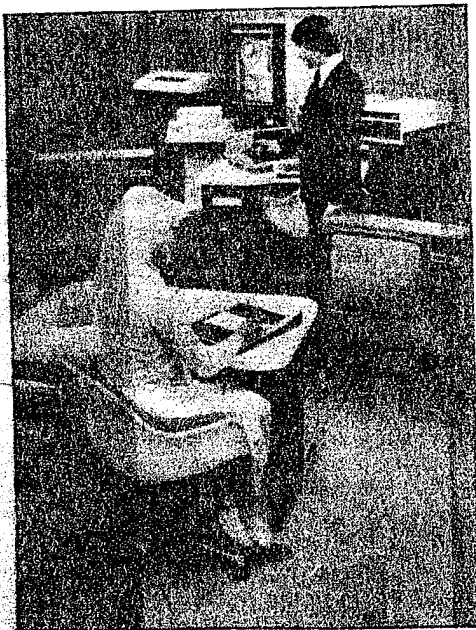
The 1800/30 Compact Office System offers a full text and data processing facility but is characterised by the emphasis on interactive viewdata terminals. It is, in fact, the younger sister to the 1800/50 launched earlier this year. It costs around £30,000 for the hardware which includes the R4000 16 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

- - MAY 1980



Redifon Computers Ltd's R800/70 system supports eight Viewdata Intelligent Colour Television ports and up to eight Writaway hand-print terminals.

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22 JUL 1980

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 EW: "What we at Redifon need are some competitors so that the market can be made more rapidly aware of viewdata's considerable potential as 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.

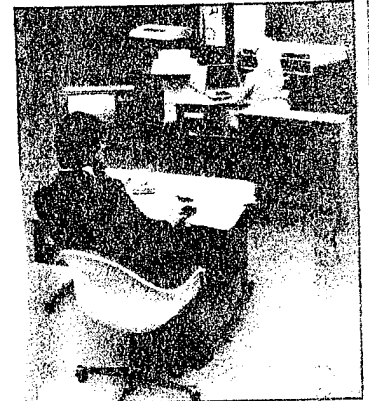
"The R1800/30 is a compact, multi-purpose, multi-function office computer that handles data processing, data entry, distributed processing, text processing, network interface and information dissemination at low cost," Aldrich said. "A four-port configuration with Viewdata Plus, 16 Mbytes of disk archiving and a conventional VDU for data and test processing costs around £30,000."

The new system can be connected to IBM, ICL 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 per cent 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 PhotoNews Ltd of Dublin.

22 JUL 1980

Redifon puts its own programme on TV



Do not adjust your set...

From the people who brought us Redifusion 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 "Writaway" 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. Writaway 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.

by Joan Gray

No longer need the anxious executive lie awake at night fretting to know how his sales figures are doing — all he needs to do is sneak downstairs and ask his tv set.

This, anyway, is the idea behind Redifon's new office computer system, the RB 1800/30, announced this week to pounding electronic music and cries of "the office revolution is here."

But Redifon, Britain's second largest computer company, is not just selling its new £30 000 system to offices, it is also negotiating with two brewery chains to sell the systems which publishers could use to order stocks, and also with most of the major chain stores to set up a 'neighbourhood' electronic shopping service.

Redifon is also hoping that its RB 1800/30 might become the basis of a whole new network of neighbourhood computer centres.

The RB 1800/30 system consists of a new computer, the RB400 (which has 96k bytes of memory) and up to 20 million bytes of data/text storage), synchroscan hand print terminals so that information can be written in, and the intelligent interactive Viewdata Plus tv system which displays the information called up from the computer.

The system can also be used to handle word processors, but full word processing capability will not be added until later this year. The company also plans to add facsimile to the system within a year, marketing manager Ken Coulter told Electronics Times.

The whole system is designed to compete directly with the IBM 8100 for simple data

processing — but at only two thirds of the cost, says managing director Mike Adrich. He also asserts proudly, that when used with the Viewdata Plus the system is 'absolutely unique' and that it has no competitors.

The Viewdata terminals are designed so that salesmen on the road can enter information in to the computer simply by writing on an electronic pad. The computer will automatically tell them if the goods they want are in stock, will calculate the total value and the VAT.

The system will also act as an electronic storekeeper, modifying the figures for the overall stock level so that these are kept constantly and automatically up to date.

But the real key to the system is the Viewdata Plus intelligent interactive colour tv set, which makes it possible for the manager to ask, at any time of the day or night, exactly how his sales are doing.

Using Redifon's Viewdata Plus service, the tv set is connected in the company's computer, and all the needs to do to interrogate punch in his identify and questions on the provided.

He can call up information on his tv screen will table of this month's month's sales, prediction for next month, and forecast for the whole at the touch of a key, to get a printout of these. Since the system interactive, he can get memos and information own — so that the whole also acts as a form of

mail.

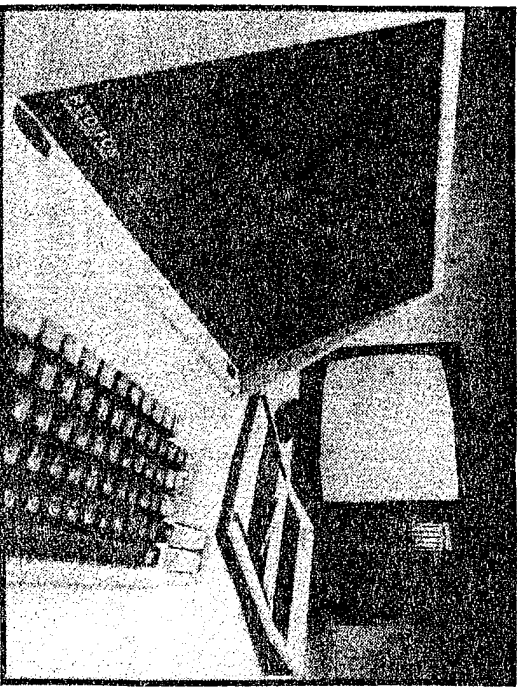
It is also provided with an education programme so that, if by any chance, the manager should wish to find out how a nuclear power station works as a break from looking at his sales forecast, all he has to do is call this up on his intelligent Viewdata Plus tv instead.

This Viewdata Plus system is also the basis for Redifon's plans for a no brain electronic shopping service.

Redifon has already sold conventional computer systems to most of the major chain stores, and the latest idea is to use this new system to provide a shopping service in the home.

Customers would simply call up the shopping programme on their Viewdata Plus tvs, and on the screen would appear lists of prices of goods available. They could then make their selection, sitting in their easy chairs, enter their credit card number, and the goods would be delivered without any need to trail from shop to shop.

This shopping service could either be provided by the stores themselves or by a 'neighbourhood computer centre' which would collect the information from all the different shops in the area so that it could provide subscribers with a Viewdata table showing all the best bargains.



Redifon's office computer system, the RB 1800/30, includes a Writeaway pad for handwritten data entry and an intelligent tv set, with Viewdata Plus, to give the executive instant information at any hour of the day or night.

Redifon seeks 'no brain' chain link

Extract from Electronics Times, London

17 JUL 1987

Redifon has been talking to all its major retail customers — House of Fraser (Harrods), Sainsbury's, John Lewis, Fine Fare and Tesco — about the possibility of setting up an electronic shopping service, and is now working with one of them on setting up a system.

Redifon is refusing to say which company will be providing the service, but is confident that it will be available within three years — and it is worth remembering that Tesco, which has already put a goods ordering system in an old people's home, is one of the furthest ahead.

9 JUN 1980

REDIFON Computers has made 70 manufacturing and administrative staff redundant at its Crawley and Peacehaven, Sussex, factories because sales in the UK are not as high as the company expected. Redifon said it had been necessary to revise its business plan "to match resources to demand" and blamed what it considered to be a recession in the UK market.

Redifon said that demand overseas for its systems was not growing fast enough to use all of its UK labour capacity.

Redifon also cited new technology employed in its latest products, particularly the R1800 office system (CW, July 17). The company says this technology made its manufacturing less labour-intensive, so that the redundancies would increase productivity and reduce product

costs.

Jobs would be found for some of the redundant staff within the two other firms in the Redifon group, Redifon Simulation and Redifon Telecommunications.

Redifon's announcement follows closely on NCR's admission that it had axed 40 jobs in its commercial and industrial marketing division (CW, July 17).

However, Redifon is still expanding its product line with the announcement of the R1800/30 two weeks ago and the news from managing director Mike Aldrich that a fully-fledged shared-logic word processing system is on its way. Aldrich describes the company's aim as "second generation word processing", in which there will be more integration between WP and DP, and in which text can be manipulated in elaborate new

ways. A new word processing terminal is being developed.

Integration of voice into the office system, which other companies such as Nexos and Data-point are working on, will come later, Aldrich says.

The processor in the 1800/30 is the smallest of three in Redifon's new R4000 range of 16-bit minicomputers. It cycles at 1,200 nanoseconds and currently supports up to 96K-bytes of memory. The next processor up cycles at 800 nanoseconds, and the top model at 400 nanoseconds.

The smaller two are built in TTL-LSI logic and the top model uses bit-slice microprocessors. The instruction set is an extension of that in the R3000 minicomputer, itself developed from the DDC 116 mini, which was copied from the Data General Nova.

All the existing Redifon software apart from that for the R2000 mini used in the large Keycheck key-to-disc systems runs on the R4000 line.

extract from

POCHODEN Organ Vychodočeskeho KV KSC
(Czech newspaper) 15.6.80

Z VÝCHODOČESKÝCH PAPIREN LANŠKROUN

Projekty počítačů

Výpočetní středisko Vychodočeských papíren Lanškroun patří mezi nejvýznamnější pracoviště tohoto druhu ve Vychodočeském kraji. Zpracovává údaje z oblasti materiálně-technického zabezpečení prostředků, účetnictví, plánu, odbytu, personálních dat a podobně.

Leží pracovníci střediska dokončili a rozpracovali celou řadu nových projektů, jednak pro potřeby podniku, především však celé výrobně hospodářské jednotky Průmyslu papíru a celulózy. Jedním z nejvýznamnějších ve VHK byl provádění projektu „Jednotné evidences pracovišť“, který je od počátku letošního roku úspěšně aplikován ve všech podnicích VHK. Způsob zpracování a možnosti tohoto projektu zaujaly pracovníky ministerstva průmyslu ČR natož, že v současné době uvažují o jeho rozšíření v ostatních podnicích resortu.

V minulém roce byla také zahájena výstavba síťové dálkové přenosu dat mezi Vychodočeskými papírny a generálním ředitelstvím, základem závodem a závody ovládanými. Zároveň generální ředitelství avizovalo Vychodočeským papírům centrální technickou podporu v oblasti počítačů.

jsou malé výpočetní systémy, které se používají pro přípravu a předzpracování dat pro samostatné počítače a dále zprostředkovávají dálkový přenos dat. Pracovníci střediska také budují automatizovaný systém řízení podniku. Usilují o co nejefektivnější využívání moderní techniky.

Významně v tom pomáhá rozvoj socialistické iniciativy. Od roku 1973 pracuje ve středisku kolektiv DSP, který nedávno přijal silnější odzvěky. Jde o brigádu, která zároveň patří mezi nejlepší mládežnické kolektivy ve Vychodočeském kraji. Mladí odborníci z výpočetního střediska pomáhají iniciativně v tom, aby jejich podnik byl řízen co nejoperativněji. Kromě toho však nespomínají i na jinou činnost. Odpracovali mnoho brigádnických hodin při plnění vnitřního programu NF, používají různé technické prostředky.

extract from
Computing 31.7.80

Drake builds data on CMC

Construction industry contracting firm Drake & Scull Engineering has ordered a £72,545 Computer Machinery (CMC) multiple processor keying system for installation at its Salisbury headquarters next month.

Containing 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 9030, 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.

MONEY MATTERS

TV group pull out of audio sales

Our CITY EDITOR

THE television rental, cable and computer group, Redifusion, has set aside over £400,000 to cover its withdrawal from audio goods retailing in the North-East.

The company says it will concentrate on renting TV sets and video players instead of Hi-Fi and ancillary equipment there.

A provision of £198m. has been made in the results for the year to the end of March to cover the costs of pulling out of audio and record retailing.

Group profits before tax are stationary at £17.12m. But sales rose from £185m. to £220m. The dividend total is unchanged at 5.35p a share.

Flight simulators

After the first half in which profit fell by £1.5m. to £5.5m., the company as expected, performed much better in the second half through its delivery of orders for flight simulators and computers. But the high "br" interest charges from £2.5m. to £1.85m. was another factor depressing

Redifusion is 58 per cent owned by British Electric