Press Cuttings

June 1982

"West Sussex County Times"25.6.82

Computers are another 'first'

CRAWLEY'S computer giant, Rediffusion, claimed to have scored another first for Britain in London last week when it officially launched its latest R2800 office computer systems as 'the office of here and now".

According to the company, previous office computer systems have been designed for users who are only a short distance from each other — for example, in the same office building.

But 'Telecentre' 42—to give four computer models in the R2800 range their umbrella title—spans nations and continents.

INSIDE INDUSTRY

by Yvonne Habgood

Mike Aldrich, Rediffusion's managing director, explained at the London launching that Telecentre talks to telecommunications and to the videotex 'tellies' that will be playing such a major role in office communications in the eighties.

"The new R2800 range assumes that the person engaged in office work may not actually be in the office," he continued. "The teleworker could be at his or her home, in another company's office, or even outside the country."

Workstations on the R2800 range, Mr. Aldrich went on to explain, could be located within an office building, or they could be located anywhere there was a telephone line. And through these workstations a person could have access to most of the facilities that exist in any office.

The four types of teleworkstations supported by the new R2800 computer systems were procedural, occupational, self-service and external.

Procedural workstations were for clerical workers with fixed tasks, such as data entry, data processing, text or word processing or handprint processing.

Occupational workstations were for secretarial, professional, technical and management personnel. Self-service stations included electronic scanning in-trays and computer assisted learning stations.

And external workstations included videotext terminals and voice response systems.

"Rediffusion systems are not blue sky products for the office of the future," Mr. Aldrich challenged. "They are working systems for the office of the here and now."

Extract from
Crawley & District Observer, Sussex

22 JUL 1982

New chips in action

A NEW computer system which can tell you what day it is, remind you where you should be, and can even get rid of your wastepaper has been unveiled by a Crawley firm.

The R2800 system even has a "help" button which will tell you what to do if mistakes are made in operating it.

The Telecentre was unveiled by Crawley-based Rediffusion Computers Ltd, at a London Press conference after a five-year development programme costing "many millions of pounds."

The system is based on television style terminals.

Up to 64 such terminals can be connected.

They can be anywhere that there is a telephone line, which means office workers could do their jobs from their homes, other firms' offices or even abroad.

The development has created new jobs. And managing director Michael Aldrich is "very optimistic" about being able to sell the system.

Some orders have already been received and he said there had been "considerable" interest from potential customers.

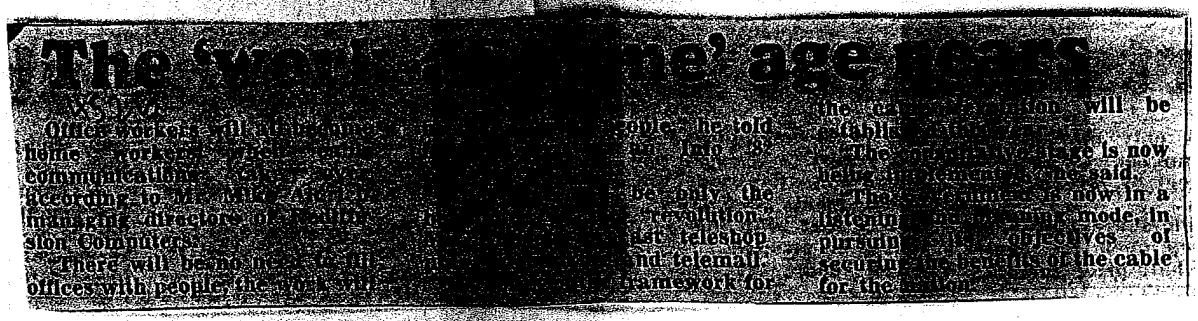
Mr Aldrich said the systems were not "blue sky products for the office of the future, but working systems for the office of here and now."

The systems will be assembled at Crawley after parts have been brought in from the firm's Peacehaven works.

Firms wanting to buy the system will pay £40,000 for the basic system and up to £300,000 for more complex versions.

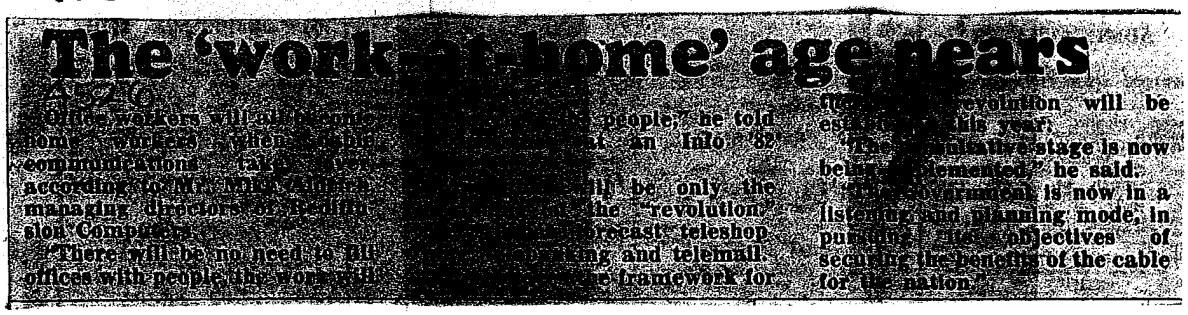
Extract from
Birmingham Evening Mail.

13 JUL 1982



Extract from
Sandwell Mail, West Midlands.

13 JUL 1982



CRAWLEY & DISTRICT COURIER, Wednesday 14th July, 1982

Computer firm makes US deal

MANOR Royal firm Rediffusion Computer Ltd is launching onto the American market.

A deal has just been signed with Blodgett Computer Information Systems Inc, of Salt Lake City, Utah, who will sell the Crawley compnay's computers in the States.

The two companies expect the agreement to yield rewards of around £10 million over the next five years.

"Rediffusion Computers has a strong record in product and market innovation, backed by traditional values of service and satisfaction," said Mike Aldrich, the Crawley firm's chief executive.

"In Blodgett we have found a partner who shares our enthusiasm for new technology, believes in the traditional values and has the marketing know-how to rapidly grow with the US market."

The Rediffusion systems are making their US debut in an exhibition at the New York Hilton Hotel.

INTERNATIONAL PRESS-CUTTING BUREAU
Lancaster House,
70 Newington Causeway, London, S.E.1

Extract from
EDP Europa Report, London.

20 JUN 1982

OFFICE OF THE HERE AND NOW

A new range of office computer systems designed for the era of 'telework' when all office information flow will be controlled through computer-based terminals has been launched by Rediffusion Computers. "The new range presupposes that the person engaged in office work may not physically be in the office. The 'teleworker' could be at home, in another company's office, or even out of the country", Mike Aldrich, MD, said. All the workstations on the R2800 range, he explained, could be located within the office and connected together by cable or internal telephone line, or they could be located anywhere there is a telephone line.

There are four types of teleworkstations supported by the new computer systems — procedural, occupational, self-service and external. Procedural workstations are for clerical workers with fixed function tasks — data entry, data processing, text or word processing and handprint processing. Occupational workstations are for secretarial, professional, technical and management personnel. Service stations include electronic scanning in-trays and computer assisted learning stations. And external workstations include videotex terminals and voice response systems.

Telecentre Systems

Four models in the R2800 range were released — the R2810, R2820, R2830 and R2840 Telecentres. These differ only in the number of workstations that can be connected, which range from 8-64. Each system can be connected to any other system. A workstation can work on any system and can Gateway from one system to any other system in a network, almost regardless of whether the other systems are made by Rediffusion, or by other manufacturers such as IBM and ICL. Networking uses a new system of HDLC-based protocols with automatic switching called REDNET. The office support system software, called ADVISOR, provides a full range of office services including in-tray, jotter, calculator, diary, document management, messaging and text or work processing. Interfaced to ADVISOR is a Corporate Videotex System (CVS). CVS provides full interactive videotex for information dissemination, transaction processing and messaging. CVS also offers the facility to Gateway, via Prestel or a mainframe system. ADVISOR and CVS use a common database. CVS is also preprogrammed and ready for immediate use. The R2800 range is a versatile single-function system. One Telecentre system will replace dedicated single-function systems — such as distributed data processing, word processing, data entry and videotex systems.

All systems use an eight million bytes virtual memory operating management system with individual models having varying amounts of real memory — up to one million bytes. Six hundred million bytes of disk storage may be stored on each system. Procedural workstations use visual display unit technology and handprint image processing. Occupational workstations, except for the secretarial station, which uses a visual display unit, are based on Rediffusion's Teleputer terminal, a multimedia communication system launched towards the end of last year that combines personal computing and videotex. The service stations include a helium neon laser scanner for optical character recognition of in-tray documents and a Teleputer terminal with video cassette or video disk for computer assisted learning. The external workstations include Chatterbox, a keypad/voice response system, and videotex terminals. The R2800 range was designed and developed in Rediffusion's Crawley, Sussex technology centre and will be built at the firm's Crawley and Peacehaven manufacturing plants. First shipments have already begun, the firm said, and subsequent deliveries will be on a 90-day lead-time. Prices will range from a floor of around £40,000 for an 8-workstation R2810 to a ceiling of about £300,000 for a 64-workstation R2840 Telecentre system.

COMMUNICATIONS

Corporate videotex finds a U.S. opening

For two years, European and Canadian companies have been trying to sell U.S. corporations private videotex systems that will provide employees easy access—via inexpensive computer terminals—to company data and graphics. Despite a growing European demand for such systems, these companies have had little success in selling them in the U.S. However, the market may be opening up, spurred by International Business Machines Corp.'s decision in mid-June to offer its European-developed videotex system to U.S. customers.

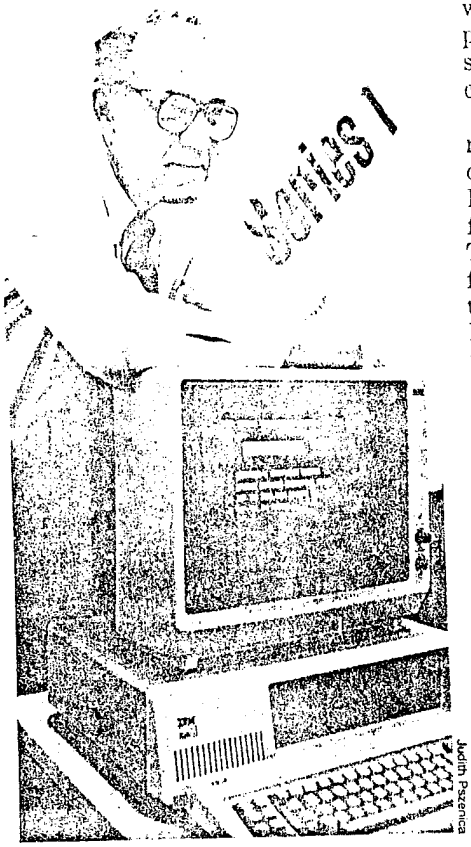
Now that the embryonic market has received IBM's seal of approval, a host of other companies are jumping in. Rediffusion Computers Ltd., a British concern that claims to have sold 120 of the 200 private videotex systems now in operation worldwide, was scheduled to announce plans late in June to sell its turnkey videotex systems in the U.S. Another British company, Computex Systems Ltd., is also expected to enter the U.S. market at the same time. And Digital Equipment Corp. (DEC), which supplies more minicomputers to videotex operators than any other company, is planning to equip its new microcomputers with videotex capabilities.

"I'm convinced the market here is just beginning to gear up," observes P.J. Anthony Chandor, chairman of Aregon International Inc., which was one of the first videotex companies to enter the U.S. market. To cash in on the growing demand for videotex systems, Chandor is moving his company's headquarters from London to its U.S. subsidiary in Stamford, Conn. Adds Michael J. Aldrich, chief executive of Rediffusion: "If IBM endorses the technology, it makes it that much more salable."

Still a baby. Unlike commercial public-information retrieval services such as those sold by CompuServe, Dow Jones News/Retrieval, and The Source, private videotex systems allow the dissemination of corporate information from a central data base throughout the company. In Britain, for example, British Leyland provides a "car locator" service to 450 Rover/Austin dealers. If a customer comes into a dealership looking for a specific make and year of car that the dealer does not have, he can use videotex to find the closest dealer who does.

One reason the corporate videotex market has been so slow to take off in the U.S. is that no one knows to what extent American companies will use the technology. "Videotex is still a baby—people are still running trials," says Michael Mensh, telecommunications product line manager and head of DEC's videotex task force. Early entrants in the U.S. market hope to grab a piece of what Michael J. McLaughlin, a leading videotex consultant and a vice-president at Booz, Allen & Hamilton Inc., predicts will be a $5 billion market by 1990.

Despite such enthusiasm, some skeptics wonder if the corporate videotex system is more of a technology in search of a market. "I doubt there's a place for private systems in the U.S.," says David Simons, president of Digital Video Corp., a consulting firm for companies interested in office automation. Critics such as Simons say computers and automated office systems already in place in large companies handle data-base management, electronic mail, and other tasks—making videotex redundant. And while high-resolution graphics are one of the main attractions of videotex now, they will become more common in microcomputers over the next couple of years as semiconductor companies build graphics capability into a silicon chip.



IBM's Doolittle: "We're providing a tool for customers to evaluate videotex technology."

Perhaps the most pressing question remaining for the videotex market is one of standards (BW—Mar. 22). While the Europeans offer one technical standard for videotex, American Telephone & Telegraph Co. last year introduced a different standard that offers more sophisticated graphics. As a result, a de facto North American standard has been developing, supported by CBS, Canada's Telidon videotex group, and Knight-Ridder Newspapers, among others. Now, though, IBM is offering a U.S. system based on Britain's Prestel standard, not on the North American one.

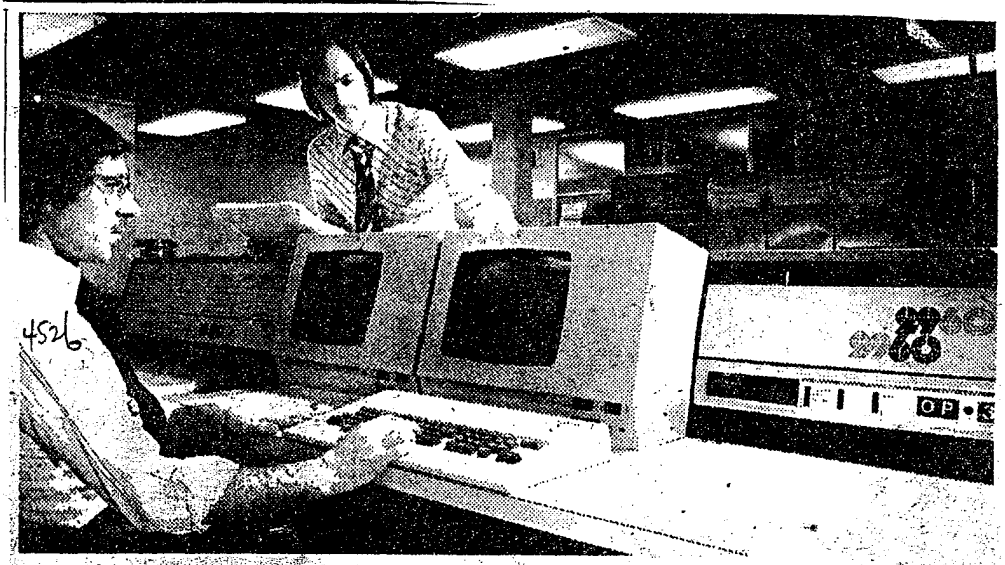
IBM's decision is already creating controversy in the industry. Mark R. Kriss, who follows videotex for the Yankee Group, a Cambridge (Mass.)-based market research firm, says IBM came into the U.S. market with a British-based system as a challenge to AT&T. "IBM is saying to AT&T, 'We didn't want to wait too long and let the concept of the de facto standard solidify,'" he declares.

Two extremes. The Prestel standard trades less sophisticated graphics for a much lower price than the North American standard can offer, and IBM is betting that graphics will not be as important to the development of videotex as AT&T thinks it will, Kriss explains. In contrast, Mark Plakias, who writes a videotex newsletter for Link Resources Corp., claims that IBM is simply making a product it developed overseas available to U.S. customers who want to experiment with it. He predicts that IBM will fall in line with the North American standard as the market develops.

IBM's true intentions may lie somewhere between these two extremes. Its product, the Series/1 Videotex System, is basically a software program being sold for a one-time license fee of $10,000. IBM's Charles Doolittle, manager of the videotex project office in the Information Systems Group, is taking a wait-and-see approach. "We're not endorsing any protocol with this announcement; we're providing a tool for customers to evaluate videotex technology," he explains, adding: "We may provide support for other videotex protocols on selected products."

INTERNATIONAL PRESS-CUTTING BUREAU
1, Knightsbridge Green, London, S.W.1

Extract from
The Journal, Newcastle upon Tyne



Plugged in to the system

MANY North-East workers dwell in the shade of redundancy and the awful certainty that things are never going to be the same again. Others realise that their work is never going to be the same again but can look forward to brighter days ahead.

By KEN DARLING

For that second group work for companies which have heeded the stark call from Minister of Information Technology Kenneth Baker to "automate or liquidate."

The prime target of his exhortation is manufacturing industry which obviously has to keep pace with—and preferably ahead of—the foreign competitors which have eagerly grasped at the advantages offered by the intelligent use of computers and microprocessors.

But grasping the opportunities offered by space-age technology is not only the ideal for the engineering shop or the shipyard.

Most office workers now accept the computer as part of workaday life—either a main frame machine humming away in some remote part of the building, one in head office or by buying time from an outside computer bureau.

Kids are coming straight from school into office work with perhaps an A or an O level in computer studies, ready to take their place with aplomb in front of the screen and keyboard of a computer terminal.

Unlike their elders, these youngsters will readily appreciate that some day in the future their "workplace" might not necessarily be at an office desk occupied from 9 to 5 each day, but anywhere there is work to be done.

All that's necessary will be the availability of a telephone line into which a computer terminal can be plugged.

Rediffusion Computers have just launched a range of office computer systems for the era of "telework" when all office information will be controlled through computer-based terminals.

Managing director Mike Aldrich said: "The new range presupposes that the person engaged in office work may not physically be in the office. The 'teleworker' could be at home, in another company's office or even out of the country."

This all paints a rosy picture for the youngster with his or her foot on the promotion ladder of sun-drenched summer days spent by the swimming pool tapping out occasional instructions in answer to messages flashed on a small TV screen.

That's a pleasant thought. But for most office workers it's still going to be a 9 to 5 day at a "procedural" workstation, engaged on routine tasks like data entry, data processing, text or word processing.

To anyone over 40 this must sound something like a dream world. But Mike Aldrich said the Rediffusion systems were not "blue sky products for the office of the future, but working systems for the office here and now."

Any middle aged office worker who has not yet come to grips with the new technology that is sweeping away pens, ink and he written page would be well advised to start night classes again.

Generations now overtaking him or her have no terrors of video screen or hard-line printout. The £180m. package of grants for developing information technology included in this year's Budget is even extending micro computer tuition to primary schools.

Michael Aldrich
David Britton
Phil Dorn
Joseph Engelberger
Mrs Steve Shirley
Chuck Peddle

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REVIEW/82

Extract from
The Times, London

24 JUN 1982

US boost for viewdata suppliers

4526

By Clive Cookson
Technology Correspondent

Two separate developments this week have boosted British hopes of winning a significant slice of the huge potential market for viewdata equipment in the United States.

IBM has decided to sell to American businesses a private viewdata system developed in Britain and compatible with Prestel, British Telecom's pioneering public service. Rediffusion Computers, the leading supplier of private viewdata systems in the United Kingdom, has also signed up an American distributor, Blodgett Computer Information Systems.

Mr Mike Aldrich, managing director of Rediffusion Computers, said IBM would "make the market" for Rediffusion.

Mr Bill Shrimpton, president of British Videotex and Teletext, agreed. BVT was set up in the United States with British Government support, both to promote British data (known as videotex in America) in general and to market Prestel in particular.

IBM's adoption of the Prestel standard in the United States is a challenge to American Telephone and Telegraph, which is trying to promote a different and incompatible viewdata standard. The two giants are coming out of their respective corners, computing and telecommunications, to join battle in the common ground of information technology.

Extract from
Financial Times, London.

24 JUN 1982

Rediffusion takes on U.S. computer giants

4526

BY GUY DE JONQUIERES

A SMALL British computer manufacturer with a turnover of less than £20m plans to start exporting equipment to the U.S. in a marketing drive which it expects will pit it directly against International Business Machines — 1981 worldwide sales: $29.7bn (£53.2bn).

The British company, Rediffusion Computers, part of the Rediffusion electronics and entertainment group, has signed a distribution agreement with Blodgett Computer Information Systems of Salt Lake City, Utah, which will sell the equipment in the U.S.

Rediffusion will make the equipment at its factory in Crawley, Sussex. It plans to set up its own service and support network in the U.S., where it hopes to achieve annual sales of about $20m within five years.

Rediffusion's move challenges recent conventional wisdom, which holds that British computer manufacturers stand little chance of exporting successfully to the highly competitive U.S. market.

But Mr Michael Aldrich, Rediffusion's managing director, claims that the strength of the dollar has tipped the economic scales in his favour.

He also believes that his company can carve out a profitable niche in a part of the market which has been largely ignored by the U.S. industry.

Rediffusion plans to sell private business videotex systems in the U.S. at prices from $80,000 to $300,000 each. These systems, known as viewdata in the UK, offer an easy-to-use method of distributing computerised information and messages inside a company.

Rediffusion has already sold more than 100 of the systems, which consist of a minicomputer linked to desktop terminals, in Europe. Its customers include American Express, Barclays Bank and Thomson Holidays.

Demand has grown much more slowly in the U.S. But last week IBM announced that it will be selling there videotex systems which are technically similar to those made by Rediffusion.

Mr Aldrich hopes that Rediffusion can ride the coattails of IBM's videotex marketing effort by selling systems for half the price.

Aregon, a subsidiary of the National Enterprise Board, has also been marketing business videotex systems in the U.S. for some time. Last week, it sold a system which will be used to link local newspapers on a cable television network owned by Dow Jones, the publishing group.

Ungracious questions to which we will have to wait for the answers.

Leaving the political and ethical questions aside the other main worry the broadcasters have about cable is the content of the cable programmes.

Many American cable channels carry non-stop hard porn and such programmes would have an immediate market in this country where men's magazines sell 10 million a month and 'adult' video is becoming the mainstay of the suburban cassette clubs. Paul Bonner recalls returning from an evening out in New York to find his seven-year-old daughter transfixed by the sexual gymnastics of Channel J. 'Of course there will have to be some sort of censorship,' he says. 'I would be worried as a citizen and as a broadcaster if *total* deregulation came in.'

Most of the cable operators have the same view. In any case, as Mike Aldrich of Rediffusion, a member of Mrs Thatcher's working party on cable systems observes: 'It would be highly unlikely that Parliament would ever accept things like pornography or extreme politics or violence to be shown on the networks. There will have to be some kind of framework.' But of course, as Richard Stern once pointed out, and as Mrs Whitehouse daily illustrates: 'Anyone can shock a baby . . . or a television audience.'

Bonner thinks the BBC is, 'always getting its knickers in a twist, usually over trivial things like language'. The Corporation, its curvy corridors still haunted by the black-serge Quaker ghost of Lord Reith, continues to pay too much attention to 'Outraged of Tunbridge Wells' and the attitude has followed the migration of BBC executives throughout the upper reaches of independent broadcasting. Brian Wenham argues that the new independent production companies, set up to feed Channel 4 and the cable operators, will inevitably overstep the mark, 'out of ignorance, mischief or simply a sense of fun. In doing so they will sooner or later oblige today's guardians of broadcasting propriety to re-examine the constraints.'

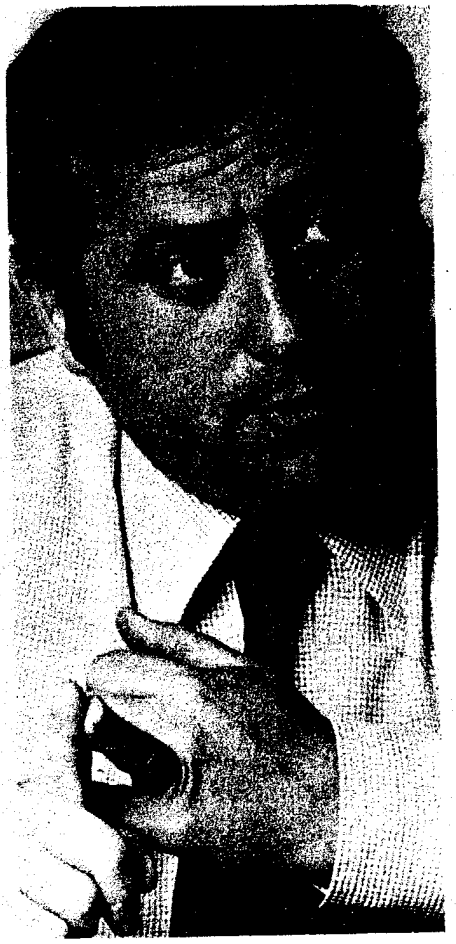
The consensus, in other words, on matters like sex, violence, language, political balance and social emphasis, that has governed TV for fifty years will inevitably be shaken. Bonner, as one of the architects of the shake-up so far is optimistic about liberalisation: 'Cable TV will open up many new voices and some of those voices will inevitably disturb you.'

Just how much you can be disturbed will be sorted out by the Hunt Committee in the next few months which produces its report on a proposed structure and standards for cable TV in September. Probably the whole issue of content will be fudged to everyone's satisfaction, and left to evolve according to public fashion and the laws relating to obscenity, libel, sedition and racial hatred. The only really thorny issue between broadcasters and cable operators is likely to be the question of whether cable must carry the broadcast channels. The BBC, IBA and Channel 4 feel this is essential, either out of pure self-interest or out of concern for the disenfranchisement of the citizen viewer. The cable companies, especially the majority who only have four channels on their existing systems, don't want to know.

There could be a compromise, like allowing four-channel operators to carry other programmes if the receiving set was *capable* of receiving the broadcast networks. The operators might then promise to provide space for the broadcasters if and when they install their 30-channel cables. This would mean the rather daft possibility of an expensive TV set in the corner of the living room which was perfectly capable of receiving ITV and BBC but actually spent its entire existence plugged into the more seductive cable television channels. Hardly a solution to win the sympathy of the viewers.

If it does come to a showdown, however, the smart money is on the cable operators. Home Secretary William Whitelaw is a friend of BBC chairman George Howard and the Home Office, which has close ties with IBA and BBC is known to favour tight regulation. But Whitelaw's star is not in the ascendant these days. On the other hand the Department of Industry under Patrick Jenkin and technology minister Kenneth Baker is Mrs Thatcher's favourite department of state at the moment and the DoI wants cable very badly indeed. Baker sees a glittering future of billions in private sector investment and tens of billions in spin-off industries. He sees videoconferencing, teletext, confravision, videotext, texy text . . .

What he might see instead is institutionalised soft porn, 24-hours a day of Fourth Division soccer and a lot of very rich cable operators who couldn't care less about information technology but we shall have to wait and see.



Rediffusion's managing director, Mike Aldrich: 'It would be highly unlikely that Parliament would accept things like pornography or extreme politics or violence to be shown on the networks. There will have to be some kind of framework.'

EXTRACT FROM COMPUTING 24.6.1982

NEWS

IBM viewdata hits US hopes at Rediffusion

Mike Aldrich, Rediffusion, sees a future for viewdata in the US

By Shirley Fawcett

Rediffusion Computers' first step into the embryonic US viewdata market could be undermined by IBM's surprise launch of its Series viewdata software in the last week.

Mike Aldrich, manag director with Rediffusion told *Computing* that for years Salt Lake City Blodgett Computer Information Systems is to have sole distribution rights for the company's newly-launched Telecentre office computing and viewdata system (Page 3, *Computing* June 17).

But last week IBM announced the launch of its Series/1 Viewdata System/1 software — introduced to the UK market last October — in the US.

IBM's SVS/1 will handle up to 24 concurrent users, a company spokesman told *Computing*, and can hold from 5,000 to 350,000 frames depending on system size. Prestel-compatible software sells for £10,500 in this country, but IBM has not as yet launched any hardware.

Aldrich told *Computing* that Rediffusion is expecting to make $20 million's worth of sales in the US over the next five years. 'We had to look pretty hard to find a US distributor who knew what viewdata was,' he claimed.

'We are not expecting an enormous bonanza because the market is still an awful lot smaller than in Western Europe, but we do see a very big future for viewdata in the US long term,' he added.

Rediffusion to sell videotex systems in US

by Boris Sedacca and Donald Kennett

REDIFFUSION Computers has entered the US market for the first time through a Utah-based data

The two companies expect the agreement to yield revenues of about $20 million over the next five years.

The Telecentre range replaces the R1800 series, offering an enhanced operating system for public network telecommunications via switching multiplexers. Networking software monitors line activity and devises alternative routes if a line goes down, optimises link utilisation and allows users to queue for busy destinations.

Applications include a Corporate Viewdata System and a management support system called Advisor providing diary, calculator, in-tray, messaging, filing and text processing facilities.

Options include a £50 voice response terminal and a VDU which conforms to Swedish ergonomics requirements and US radio frequency interference standards.

"Our distributor, Blodgett Computer Information Systems will sell the system but Rediffusion will maintain it. It will be marketed by geographical territories, beginning with the State of Utah," explained Mike Aldrich, of Rediffusion Computers.

ALDRICH ... "Expecting agreement to yield revenues of about $20 million over the next five years."

Extract from
Electronics Weekly, London

23 JUN 1982

Rediffusion makes its office move

REDIFFUSION has made its move into the office automation market with what it calls the "Office of the Here and Now".

"We're going to try and do everything that you see in Star Trek," said managing director Mike Aldrich, announcing the new R2800 Telecentre series of machines.

"The new range presupposes that the person engaged in office work may not physically be in the office," says Aldrich, who has created the neologism 'telework' to describe the breed of displaced person.

The new system therefore supposes four different kinds of teleworkstations for the different sub-groups of teleworker – procedural, occupational, self-service and external functions.

But while the system will be able to form the basis of fully integrated office systems, Aldrich says that they will sell them initially as single-function machines, because the user buys that way. "There really isn't a market at this time for the integrated office systems. To sell them you sell them as single-function machines. In selling computers to business people, they always want to know how much the system will save them – the market thrust is still on cost-justifying single functions," he said.

What Rediffusion hopes to do with these new systems is get into offices now, and when people start to realise that they want integrated systems, simply point out that they already have the basis.

Extract from
New Electronics, London

29 JUN 1982

Rediffusion widens area networking

Rediffusion's office products — the Teleputer, the Writeaway pad, the Chatterbox — can now be connected into a fully-fledged office system using the R2800 Telecentre. The Telecentre system uses the telephone network to connect terminal devices either internally or over national or international networks.

The Telecentre system is based on a management minicomputer controlling information organised into a 33 to 66Mbyte fixed disc unit and a switchable magnetic tape unit. The four versions of the Telecentre, the R2810, R2820, R2830 and R2840, differ in the number and types of terminals that can be connected. The minicomputers are Rediffusion 3000A and R5000A — the former with 16bit cycle times up to 800ns, the latter with 16bit cycle times of 400ns. The R2830, which takes up to 64 workstations, uses two interconnected computers.

The minicomputer also controls network interfaces to other system computer and telecommunication systems. Rednet, an array of intelligent switching multiplexers which pass h.d.l.c. messages, connects Telecentres together and to many different communication systems. Rednet allows for user switching, contention, load balancing, auto re-routing and network supervision.

Mike Aldrich, managing director of Rediffusion Computers, stressed that the Telecentre and Rednet system is a wide area networking system: 'the new range presupposes that the person engaged in office work may not be physically in the office.' Rediffusion does not market either a local area network or a p.a.b.x.; Rediffusion terminals within the office would be connected through another manufacturer's p.a.b.x. or through the Rediffusion cabling system which Aldrich described as a form of baseband network.

Rediffusion has no plans to develop a broadband local network for the office. Rediffusion is involved in the development of cable TV systems, and sees a natural convergence between broadband office systems and cable TV, says Aldrich.

Aldrich considers that the user still buys systems for one purpose only; 'it is a monofunction market', he said. The 2800 system may suffer the same fate as the 1800 system, announced two years ago, which was primarily used as a videotex system although it could accommodate other forms of data entry and retrieval. However, Aldrich pointed out that the installed systems could prove a good market for Rediffusion when users realise the multifunction potential of their systems.

For further information circle 381

nformation Technology Year 1982

stel — information you need at the press of a button.

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British Telecom as a world leader in telecommunications is very involved in the event.

British Telecom was the first to introduce and market a successful computer based television and telephone linked information system, Prestel, and sold this viewdata technology to the telephone administrations of various countries including West Germany and Switzerland.

Prestel and Datel terminals will be on display and demonstrated on BT's Stand at the exhibition when staff will be on hand to explain some of the modern trends in telecommunications.

British Telecom is supplying two of the main lectures during the special three-day seminar period with the opening presentation at 2.00 pm tomorrow being given by Mr David Brunnen, Head of Management Systems British Telecom spectrum.

Extract from
Plymouth Gazette
3.6.1982

Western Evening Herald
Plymouth
Planner No. 67b-650
Daily — 63,000

- 1 JUN 1982

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Plymouth Polytechnic is making a major contribution to Information Technology Year in the South West by mounting an exhibition and associated seminar programme.

Visitors will be able to sample actual potential applications of the new technology and listen to a variety of experts on the field of information technology.

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Extract from
Electronics Times, London.

24 June 1982

Mike Aldrich, managing director of Rediffusion Computers, using the Teleputer workstation. "The only thing it's not got is the cigar lighter, and we're working on that."

Improving management productivity with an electronic office system

by Joan Gray

Functions which many other companies are still only promising are available now on Rediffusion's new Telecentre electronic office system.

Rediffusion's Teleputer workstations give managers a combined electronic in tray, message system, personal computer, filing cabinet and document searcher, text processor, viewdata and graphics terminal, and diary manager. The system can also act as an interactive video terminal, connect into a cable tv network — it can even be used for teleshopping.

"They've got everything but the cigar lighter," said Rediffusion's managing director Mike Aldrich, "and we're working on that."

The electronic in tray comes by connecting the Teleputer management workstation to a service station with an oct which can read 700 pages of A4 — or a million characters — an hour into the R2800 Telecentre computer which controls the system. The system can handle a range of different typefaces, but not handwriting.

An electronic diary on the workstation does not just keep track of a manager's meetings, it also makes it possible for him to analyse exactly how he spent his week. And bearing in mind that one of the biggest causes of management inefficiency is the way they grasshopper around from one task to another, this could be a salutary — and productive — exercise.

Optimism

Aldrich is optimistic that using terminals like this will improve management productivity — and even cut the number of managers needed in what he describes as Britain's "overmanagered and undermanaged" industries. "Improving management productivity is going to be the black art of the 1980s," he said.

But, added marketing director Ken Coulter, the system is not a brand new development dreamt up out of nowhere, but an extension of the R1800 data processing, videotex and computer systems Rediffusion has already sold to more than 150 companies.

"We didn't sit down and draw up fancy charts and impress people by fancy thinking," said Coulter. "Everything we've put forward is from experience with blue chip customers and their views."

Rediffusion's new range includes the Teleputer series of workstations, and the R2800 computer system. There are four types of workstation: a clerical workstation for word processing and data entry, the management workstation, the service workstation and the 'external workstation,' the Chatterbox.

The Chatterbox system provides home workers, agents, distributors, etc with access to a computer that gives them information directly over a telephone line. An acoustic cup is placed over the telephone mouthpiece, the appropriate code is keyed in, the computer recognises the instructions — to check the status of a series of orders, for example — and answers the caller in digitised speech.

A key characteristic of the Rediffusion Telecentre system is that it is designed to be used in the home as well as the office. Rediffusion is the first company to do this, and produce a system designed to help make true the forecasters' predictions that the spread of electronics will make it possible for more and more people to work from home. All the Teleputer worker needs is his terminal and access to a telephone line.

"Flexiplace is going to be part of our future culture," said Aldrich. "We looked at our business and decided that 60% of our workforce did not need to be in our building to do their jobs. We decided that the office is not something that goes on in four walls but is a function to provide a means of communication between people and the outside world. Our system is designed around the concept of the Teleworker doing his job from home in his own electronic cottage."

The system uses Rediffusion's own distance networking system, called Rednet, a broadband network.

Unlike other computer companies such as ICL and Wang, Rediffusion has no plans to add a telephone exchange to its office product line. "We're watching PDX developments very carefully, but I'm wondering how long the PDX will be with us," said Aldrich. "By the 1990s all the switching arrangements will be carried out in individual terminals. It's heresy, bo, there it is."

Rediffusion's Telecentre electronic office offers management, secretarial and computer assisted learning workstations. The striped box in the corner is the R2800 computer which controls the system.

Extract from
Computing, London.

17 JUN 1982

Plessey, Rediffusion opt for phone nets

By Shirley Fawcett and Caroline Shaw

Plessey and Rediffusion Computers have unveiled their office systems strategy, with both companies slighting local area network technology in favour of telephone lines as the principal means of communication.

Mike Aldrich, managing director of Rediffusion, told *Computing*: 'The way we see it, in offices the prime requirement is to plug devices in through a pabx because they already have one installed. It will be some time yet before they are ready to start using local area networks.'

Plessey's new Integrated Business Information System (Ibis) is based around its digital PDX exchange and is capable of handling voice, text and data within an office environment.

The new products launched as part of this are a work station, a datapipe to allow non-Plessey terminals to link onto the network, and a viewdata terminal to run a new private viewdata system the company has developed. A range of application software, providing users with such facilities as transaction processing, has also been launched.

Aldrich told *Computing* that Rediffusion has brought out four different types of work station as part of its new Telecentre system, aimed at four different categories of office workers.

'We don't think there is such a thing as a standard terminal,' Aldrich said. 'You need to be able to mix and match devices to fit the needs of different types of workers within an organisation.'

The company has launched micro-based work stations designed for procedural, occupational, service and external job categories. At the heart of the system is a range of central Rediffusion-built minicomputers, which will handle up to 64 work stations.

The company has also launched a switching system – Rednet.