Terminals turn hotel rooms into communication centers

In the next couple of years, a growing number of travelers will find that the familiar TV set provided in virtually every hotel room is evolving into a computer terminal, creating an office away from home as well as a complete communications and entertainment center. The services offered by in-room terminals include airline schedules, stock market quotations, local shopping guides, electronic messages, word processing, video games, dining information, movies via satellite, and special-event broadcasts.

Two companies entered the in-room computer terminal market in 1982. Travelhost of Dallas, Texas, demonstrated their system in Chicago in April of this year. Hoteltech International, a California-based company, unveiled “Suitetalk” a month later in San Francisco. Each company is predicting the placement of 450,000 to 500,000 terminals by 1985, based on a market of approximately 2.5 million hotel rooms.

Users of either system are billed directly on their credit card. Travelhost has a $3 minimum usage fee, which buys 12, eight, or six minutes, depending on the hour of the day. Each additional minute costs 17, 25, or 34 cents.

The Quality Inn Market Center in Dallas was the site of all field testing for the Travelhost network, and the hotel chain subsequently decided to offer the service in nearly all of its 65,000 rooms.

ITT Dialcom of Silver Spring, Maryland, provides the host mainframe, principal databases, and the capacity to access an unlimited number of other databases in other computer facilities. First Data Resources of Omaha provides credit authorization and billing information services for hotel guests using the Travelhost terminals. Uninet of Kansas City, Missouri, has joined with Travelhost to provide the communications link between the terminals and the host computer.

Hoteltech International's system consists of Suitetalk, the in-room unit; the Concierge, a control unit for the hotel that supplies word processing and graphics; and Hotelnet, a database network that connects with the hotel's telephone network. The hotel leases Concierge for $1000 a month and pays $30 a month for each Suitetalk unit. User fees are $9 an hour at night and $20 an hour during the day. In addition, the hotel can create and sell advertising for the system.
Voice of the Army extends over network

High-speed video, voice, and data communications now reach more than 30,000 US Army personnel in 1400 sites around the world faster, thanks to help from a $500,000 local area network from Sytek, a Mountain View, California, firm.

Installed at the headquarters at the US Army Communication Command located in Fort Huachuca, Arizona, the broadband local area network, called Localnet 20/100, can disseminate communications over coaxial cable in several buildings at the base. Using Localnet, the USACC can link different vendors' electronic communication equipment types, such as personal computers, terminals, printers, and mainframes.

The USACC, dubbed "the voice of the army," utilizes communications technologies such as Localnet to maintain sophisticated communications systems for all higher Army echelons, including the Army's air traffic control systems.

Sytek's Localnet installation consists of two subnetworks: The first is a midsplit system, dedicated solely to Localnet traffic; the second, a subsplit system, carries Localnet traffic and commercial television signals on a single cable. The subsplit portion provides communications access to terminal users virtually anywhere at the base by tapping into an already existing cable-TV system.

The Localnet network will enable information to be processed more efficiently at Fort Huachuca, before being transmitted over other communications media to the agency's personnel who are dispersed throughout the United States and 13 other countries.

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Smart cardiac implant "talks" to doctors

An implantable microcomputer pacemaker named Cosmos promises to revolutionize cardiac care for millions of heart patients around the world. Over 30 US patients have accepted the software-based chest implant this year and are presently undergoing clinical studies, according to its Freepport, Texas, manufacturer, Intermedics, Inc.

The software-based Cosmos classifies and remembers millions of events that occur within an individual patient's heart during a year. Through a companion desktop computer that completes the product system, Cosmos can produce a written summary of a patient's heart activities and the condition of the pacemaker, alerting the doctor to any changes that might have gone unnoticed. With its sophisticated telemetry capability, Cosmos allows the patient's pacemaker to communicate a full range of information over an ordinary telephone line to the doctor.

Cosmos, the first of a smart generation of implantable computer pacemakers, may be reprogrammed to almost any combination of pacing prescriptions as necessary. Cosmos is designed to closely mimic Mother Nature in restoring the heart's electrophysiological functions across a wide range of clinical situations. Its design allows it not only to maintain heart rate, but also to respond to physiologic needs such as increases in heart rate due to exercise.

Cosmos is a DDD-mode pacemaker, designed to sense and pace in both the atrial and ventricular chambers of the heart. According to Intermedics, it goes well beyond the DDD-mode pacemakers now in use by avoiding the occurrence of pacemaker-sustained tachycardia (a too-rapid heart rate), a potentially threatening condition.

Cosmos weighs 65 grams and measures only 11 millimeters in thickness, making it among the smallest pacemakers of any design.

Intermedics has developed a software-based microcomputer pacemaker system designed to classify and remember critical heart activity data upon implantation in a cardiac patient's chest. Cosmos' data is communicated directly to the attending physician's RX-2000 desktop computer.