Twenty-six manufacturers of disk drives and controllers have endorsed the proposed Enhanced Small Disk Interface, or ESDI, standard for 5.25-inch Winchester disk drives. The announcement of the action was made March 25 in Santa Clara.

The 15 disk drive manufacturers endorsing the ESDI are Maxtor, Magnetic Peripherals, Memorex, DMA Systems, Iomega, Cynthia Peripherals, Disctron, Vertex Peripherals, International Memories, Miniscribe, NEC Information Systems, Micropolis, Priam, Evotek, and Atasi.


The ESDI, developed in a cooperative effort by the above manufacturers, allows a 10M-bit-per-second data transfer rate, double that of the current ST506/412 interface standard. The developers note that although advances in technology have made increased recording capacities possible, manufacturers have been constrained by the ST506/412's low data transfer rate. According to the development group, the ESDI will enable manufacturers to increase recording densities and utilize advanced encoding schemes to increase overall storage capacities in future products.

The ESDI calls for NRZ (nonreturn-to-zero) data transfer between the drive and the controller. The data separator, housed on the controller in ST506/412-compatible drives, will be moved onto the drive itself under ESDI. Thus, manufacturers will be free to choose such schemes as run-length-limited encoding to increase total storage capacity.

The ESDI specification was written with a number of optional features to give the systems designer, controller designer, and disk drive designer flexibility in the configuration of their products. The optional serial command and response capability allows absolute cylinder addressing, which reduces command transfer time. In addition, the response capability makes it possible for controllers to dynamically determine the configuration of the attached drives.

Other optional serial commands enhance error recovery and diagnostics through such functions as track and data-strobe offsets. In addition, the ESDI allows multiple drive systems to do overlapped seeks, thus enhancing system-wide performance.

For additional information on ESDI, contact Skip Kilsdonk or Norm Zimmerman at Maxtor Corporation, 5201 Lafayette Street, Santa Clara, CA 95050; (408) 748-7740.

Recording format standard for quarter-inch streamers proposed

A group of manufacturers has agreed on a proposed recording format standard for streaming quarter-inch cartridge tape drives. The proposal, designated QIC-24, is intended to permit interchange of recorded media. The agreement was announced March 3 after a meeting of the Working Group for Quarter-Inch Cartridge Drive Compatibility in San Diego.

"This important agreement will enable interchange of cartridges across several manufacturers' streaming drives for the first time," commented Raymond C. Freeman, Jr., QIC working group facilitator and president of Freeman Associates, a Santa Barbara consulting firm. He also noted that the standard, when coupled with the proposed QIC-02 device interface standard developed in August 1982, should trigger greater market acceptance for quarter-inch streamers.

The six QIC members who voted in favor of QIC-24 are Archive Corporation, Cipher Data Products, Inc., Data Electronics, Inc., the Qantex Division of North Atlantic Industries, Inc., Tandberg Data A/S, and Wangtek. Five observer companies also participated in the meeting—ADES, Apollo Magnetics Corporation, the Kennedy Company, the Nortronics Company, and Systech Corporation. Two QIC members, Irwin Magnetics, Inc., and Sankyo Seiki Manufacturing Co., Ltd., were not present at the meeting.

The QIC group was established to develop and propose standards to spur the use of quarter-inch cartridge tape drives. For further information on QIC or a copy of meeting minutes, contact Freeman Associates, 311 East Carrillo Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101; (805) 963-3853.

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IEEE 696 standard published

The IEEE 696 (S-100) standard, approved by the IEEE Standards Board last December, has been issued.

The 40-page document is available from both the IEEE Computer Society and the IEEE Service Center. For information on prices and ordering, see the full announcement in "Microstandards," page 56.