

Optimistic outlook for economical home information system

Consumers and businesses will soon be able to receive all types of information sent to their television sets from computers over FM radio waves, officials of a new company say.

Telefax Communications of Hensall, Ontario says it has developed a unique communications method which will make possible within months the first electronic home information system at a cost affordable to consumers.

It says the system could also drastically cut world communication costs, speed mail service, deliver educational programs to homes and schools and make obtainable copies of movies and musical recordings at a fraction of today's costs.

"We have taken existing technology and designed a completely new medium," says Adrian Bayley, president of Telefax Communications, which has a model of its system operating in Hensall, a town 66 kilometres north of London, Ontario.

Existing systems that send computerized information to home TV sets require use of telephone or cable connections, with their attendant costs. The Telefax system eliminates those.

The model now in use sends information to a TV set in Bayley's living room from a radio station tower 100 kilometres north of Hensall.

Spare bands

The information is fed into the television through a briefcase-sized decoding box that can act as a computer and would retail for about \$150. That compares with the cost of about \$300 for a small home computer on the market today.

FM radio stations have spare bands that they do not use for broadcasting their programs. The Telefax model uses a band from a local radio station which can send information continuously over the station's broadcast area, without interfering with regular programming.

Mr. Bayley says that by next May, Telefax will set up a national franchising system with FM radio stations, offering to sell them equipment and information programs which the stations can then market to consumers and businesses.

Basic user costs for leasing equipment will be about \$12 a month. That compares with leasing costs of \$47 to \$70 a month for the Grassroots system now used in Manitoba by about 1 000 farmers, and operated by Infomart of Toronto.

That system uses Telidon technology



The Toronto Star

Telefax Communications of Hensall, Ontario have developed a home and business information system that uses FM waves to feed information into your home TV. Adrian Bayley (top right) company president, Noel Moore (left) of Scriptonics Corp. and his son Aidan demonstrate system.

for transmitting colour and graphics, and is a two-way system. Users can ask the computer directly for information.

One-way system

The Telefax system also sends colours and graphics but only one way: users cannot communicate directly with the computer sending information.

But by using a hand-held keypad, a user can bring into his control box, and on to his television screen, specific information from the continuous flow emitted by the radio tower.

William Hutchison, president of Infomart which is owned by Torstar Corp. and Southam Inc., says the Telefax system is apparently the first to be able to receive colour and graphics over FM radio waves.

"It opens up opportunities for alternate and less expensive means of transmitting information to homes and businesses, and that's very important for the development of the industry," Mr. Hutchinson said.

Telefax is owned 51 per cent by Agripress Canada Ltd. of Hensall and

49 per cent by Scriptonics Corp. of Toronto.

Scriptonics is a consulting company owned by Noel Moore. Mr. Moore says the system cannot yet use Telidon technology, but developments in microchips and circuitry should make this possible by next year. That will expand the use of Telidon-type information to people outside of cities, who now must pay long-distance telephone charges to obtain the information.

System tested last June

Mr. Bayley says it is possible that subscribers to the proposed radio information network could pay a small amount — say \$1 — for a station to send a movie or musical recording to them. A cassette machine plugged into the subscriber's receiving equipment could make a permanent copy of the movie or record.

There are legal problems involved with that idea, but Mr. Bayley says that if movie or record producers were paid royalties, such a system would not be infringing on copyright.

Telefax could theoretically be used to send mail, he says. Messages sent using the system are private because they are sent in digital form — a series of electronic pulses received by individually coded equipment.

Telefax also sees the possibility of expanding its system world-wide by using satellites. It plans to test satellite transmission by next March.

(Article from The Toronto Star.)

Institute to study design, materials

The University of Waterloo has established an Institute for Experimental Mechanics to study new design methods and new materials. The institute will promote international co-operation among researchers and help support provincial and federal efforts to promote high technology industry, according to institute director Jerzy Pindera.

Its activities will include establishing a research centre on the University of Waterloo campus in Waterloo, Ontario, to do research and provide consulting services for industry and to train researchers and laboratory personnel.

Work will be undertaken in analytical mechanics, modelling and measurement, materials science, applied physics, applied optics and applied mathematics as well as in a range of studies of behaviour of engineering components and structures.