

1.2 NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

With the dramatic developments in computer and communication technologies, technology has once again created a new means of communication: two-way, interactive communication which can be under the control of the user with respect to time, place and method of access.

VIDEOTECH

Videotex is a merging of computer and communications technologies and provides easy access to information and information services available from information utilities through telephone, cable or satellite communication networks. The information is usually comprised of both text and graphics and is accessible by the user through a videotex terminal in the home, office or in a public access location such as a library, airport, shopping mall or hotel. The graphics capability of videotex systems can range from no graphics (ASCII text) to a mosaic graphics (eg. Prestel and Antiope protocols) to enhanced alpha-geometric graphics such as those generated using the Telidon or the North American Presentation Level Protocol Standard (NAPLPS). Videotex systems are designed to be "user-friendly" or easy to use. Sitting at home in front of a television set, the user has access to the power and complexity of the central computer. At the touch of a fingertip, commands are given through a calculator-like keypad attached to a special decoder. The interactive dialog is established using the telephone or cable network. What is important to the user is knowing what information is required at that particular time, how it can be located and whether or not it is adequate to meet his or her need.

In a sense, videotex provides the ability for the user to extract only that information which is relevant or useful to him, creating a personalized electronic "newspaper" or "magazine" every time the information utility is accessed. In addition to providing access to the central information banks, videotex provides an electronic mail facility through which the users on a system or service can communicate.

TELETEXT

Teletext, like videotex, is a communication technology that makes text and graphic information available through a special decoder attached to a television screen. Unlike videotex, it provides a limited capability for the user to interact with the system. Lacking the two-way communication capability of videotex, teletext does not allow the user to send information to the originating information utility or to other subscribers on the service. The advantages of teletext systems, however, are that they are cheaper to install and easier to operate and use. The European marketplace is primarily teletext.