THE PRESTEL DIRECTORY

INCORPORATING PRESTEL MAGAZINE

October 83

Cover Story:
TIME OFF WITH PRESTEL

Contents

How To Use Prestel

Prestel Subject Index

Prestel Information Providers

Magazine:
Time Off With Prestel
Business Prestel
Consumer News
Travel
Prestel in the Office
New Products
In this issue

Taking another aspect of Prestel for our second main feature, we decided to look at the potential the system has to offer to the business world. We visit a lot about the 'future of Prestel' with its largely computer-based services and increasing amounts of paperless. What we wanted to find out was what sort of part Prestel has to play. Can the integrated into the system's service and what in, by far the most striking thing about Prestel is the variety of subjects it offers. This is really brought home to us as we put together this story for this issue of the magazine. The diversity of something we should highlight since we believe that it's one of Prestel's most important features. Another feature which is beginning to emerge is that people are looking at how they can use Prestel to meet specific business needs. In this issue we talk about two companies which have chosen Prestel in a positive move to expand their marketing. One, in H. J. Veale, is just making its first move. The other, Solvay, has already proved that this system works. In fact, just as we were going to press, Wally Morgan of Solvay told us that his company has been so impressed by the results that they are planning a similar joint venture. We look forward to reporting on this in a future issue.

COVERAGE STORY: TIME OFF WITH PRESTEL

Looking at the pre-Sprinkles has to plan in the planning of our future activities

BUSINESS VIEWS:

More from CITI/SERVICE

From Line — a new service from Prestel

Australia looks at Law

FEATURE:

Euphoric without overdrugs — how one man tackled the question of expanding his business

MICRO SCENE:

News for micro users

HOME SCENE:

Picking the winners with Prestel - Club hits a new service adds home users appeal

TRAVEL NEWS:

Brynans for Maybank

Holidays with difference

FEATURE:

PRESTEL AT WORK

Is there anything more than an information system?

NEW PRODUCTS:

What's new on the scene

It seems that we are constantly being told that the amount of leisure time available to us is increasing and will continue to do so. Amusing that this is correct... and who are we to doubt it — it follows that more people will be looking for ways to use that leisure time in some way productively. Now for a long time that has been the scope of most leisure novelists has been a look at the houses and hours of entertainment of varying quality. Even if at this time it is for a more sedentary or more mentally stimulating. Where do you go for ideas? How about back to that little book in the corner? Not to the TV channels, of course, but in Prestel.

Not just information

There is, in fact, a wealth of information available on Prestel which relates directly to a wide range of leisure activities. Not just information either. There are countless opportunities to exercise your brain with quizzes and competitions — many of them with the added incentive of a prize to be won. Prestel, with its response frame facility offers an excellent medium on which to operate a competition or quiz. Answers can be keyed in and the user can be told immediately if it is right or wrong. To send an entry is a simple matter of pressing a key — which certainly beats filling in, cutting out and posting a coupon.

Family Living is one of the information providers with a very active magazine-type database. Organized by the National Magazine Company, the publishers of such popular magazines as Good Housekeeping, Cosmopolitan and Elle, this database concentrates on entertainment for the whole family, with a wide range of topics and competitions, and to mention tournaments, reviews and children's pages.

A recent addition is the Housewife's Guide column, journalist and compiler, Wann, writes about what the family for the Speculator and 5 for opinions from this feature which are carried monthly by Family Living. The reviews themselves are both witty and well informed and there is the added incentive that the user can also enter the sweepstakes reviewed.

Get into shape

So, if you prefer a more sedentary lifestyle, you can still be active, home, desired, using your specially selected leisure, dreaming daily of all these places you could be winning. You may however, as you sip your wine, suffer a twinge of resentment. Should you for the sake of your health and figure, be doing something a little more active? You could, of course, enjoy running shoes and head for the sole blue runner (well, the local park to join the growing number of Britain's runners or benefit of jogging the leisure-lad bench before you have even reached the garden gate, you might wish to get yourself into shape first.

Sport for all

The fastest way is to learn where and how to do this, or where to get more information on a sport you are interested in is to consult the Sports Council's pages. An SF from the early days of Prestel, The Sports Council, with their Statue 'Sport For all' has an extensive database. Sandra Bolton, who looks after the Sports Council database, explains: We have something like 1000 pages of information which we have tried to design around the sort of questions we are commonly asked. People want to know how to get started in sport, where to find local facilities and in some cases we find a great demand for our various information sheets.

Founded in 1972, the Sports Council works, as its name implies, to develop and improve the knowledge and practice of sport and physical recreation in the interests of social welfare and the enjoyment of leisure among the public at large in Great Britain and to encourage the attainment of high standards in conjunction with the governing bodies of sport and physical recreation.

Leisure boom

The experience of the Council certainly supports the view that we are entering a leisure boom. Usage of the information pages is increasing as more people want to get involved in sport and in 1983 the number of access doors doubled, thanks partly to the introduction of response frames.

If your interest in sport stems mainly from the spectator’s point of view you will find plenty in Prestel to suit you in the main events, latest information on results and scores. Prestel polling gives you the results of major events, with the information going on-screen within a very short time of the end of the match and for football results you can turn it on. Various William’s Theatrical pages for Flavonco. David Tennant of the Daily Record reports on how the local fanatics’ agreement with the Council formed their own company to become Information Providers and, with the blessing of the Rialto and Prestel, took over the contract to provide the up-to-the-minute football scores.

Peter Whitty, General Manager of Triumph’s Amelco Productions, looks at the Theatre Link-up

Maurice Williams, who saw Prestel as the only medium for this type of service because of the upcoming legislation, explained how his company has decided to go into the theatrical ticket service at the Space Time Romance Box-Office Computer System. Maurice said that the council had received an initial plan in 1980, enabling a number of companies to operate a service to telephones for making bookings and arranging the distribution of tickets. The system is currently being tested and a booking is made by a loyal patron for a 3pm performance on 21st January. The user goes to the Philadelphia computer which will make it possible for the theatre to be accessed via a Prestel on the booking being made and confirmed in the same manner.

While Space Time Systems are striving to introduce a new sector of the entertainment industry to the benefits of computer technology, another part is already fairly closely involved with Prestel.

Theatre bookings

An altogether different aspect of Prestel’s involvement in the leisure field is its services covering entertainment. For example, it is possible to make bookings with all the 60 screen cinemas via Prestel, including the Royal Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford and London’s Palladium. Basically, these services enable the user to key in seat, date and credit card details and all he has to do is sit back and wait for the letter to arrive. One possible reason, of course, is that this is a built-in ordering system and the user does not know at the time of booking whether the seats he wants are available. This could, of course, be a short-term drawback.

A company called Space Time Systems with its own computer theatre booking system is working hard to update the theatre world, which does tend to cling rather tenaciously to its traditions. Old-timers say that if you compare the number of old foggy little lady in the box office with her ticket counter, and her pencil and her little book, the picture is a far cry from what it was in the old days. It should he the other way round at all. Some companies (page 28) have already been making bookings via this service and arranging the distribution of tickets. The user then does not have to make a very long journey. The first step is to make the booking by a loyal patron, and then the user goes to the Philadelphia computer which will make it possible for the producer to be accessed via Prestel on the booking being made and confirmed in the same manner.

‘Behind the scenes’

This is another behind the scenes’ element of the leisure industry and shows how the average consumer is probably not nearly as aware of how much the theatre industry costs. Maurice is aware of the problem of whether to play or not, and is currently looking for ways to attract people into the theatre. But what he has to do is the organisation which is responsible for producing and running the theatre. On the other hand, he sees the theatre’s job of keeping the doors open to the public as the most important. As no one in the leisure industry has any residents of their own, the costs are shared by the producers and audiences alike, and each person has to make a contribution to the cost of the show.

Endorsement

Other companies using the service include Theatrical Productions and Clive Coldewey Ltd. These are amongst the many theatre management companies operating in Prestel. Conventionally, a theatre like the Palladium tends to have fewer ‘dine in the theatre’ facilities, but this is a means of meeting the expectations of the audience. The audience can choose from the menu and have the meal served to them in the theatre. This facility was introduced as a result of the last government’s decision to increase prices, and it is an attractive way of ensuring that the audience can still enjoy the show at a reasonable price.

Home-based entertainment

In addition to the full directory, the guide also carries a monthly feature on recommended restaurants and reports on special offers. In all, the Council has collected information on over 100 restaurants, and is able to provide up-to-date information on their opening times and special offers.

The Sports Council provides a Sports Information Centre

The object of the Sports Council is to encourage the provision of facilities and the creation of more opportunities for everyone who wants to enjoy sport and activities in their community.

The Sports Council’s Prestel pages contain details of how and when, and where to participate in over 100 different sports. There are facts about the governing bodies of sport, events, sports facilities, careers, sport for the disabled, and information relating to the administration of sport. Free Sports Council publications are available through the response forms.
FT service focus on electronic media

In a joint venture, the Financial Times and leading advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather have launched a new media service—the FT Electronic Media Closed User Group. This joins a number of media services already available on Prestel, but what the FT and O&M claim makes this one different—and unique—is that it confines itself to two specific areas of interest: namely UK and European business, personal press and electronic media. Speaking at the launch of the service package, Chris Bedford, UK Advertising Manager for the FT, explained: "The service is aimed at advertising departments and UK advertising agencies. It's because the timing is right now to benefit from such a service with the use of new technology increasing and people becoming attuned to obtaining information via this source..." The business press section which is compiled by the FT's personal daily and Sunday press and other international business magazines plus eight magazines O&M's contribution to this section is an independent 'newswire' containing changes in the media and their implications. This section also contains details of UK and international radio and television.

Single source
Ogilvy & Mather are also responsible for the service dealing with electronic media, whether it be TV, cable, satellite, video or internet. David Wood, Assistant Media Director, explained: "We have aimed at providing a single source database covering the whole spectrum of electronic media. You make sources for this information will not only emanate from here in the UK but importantly from our 14 offices across western Europe, all of whom are committed to keeping pace with the new media developments." Again the database will contain factual information plus a commentary from O&M. Membership of the Closed User Group service is free.

Sketchy details
Often the details given to the doctor are too sketchy or inaccurate for him to be able to pinpoint the particular treatment and assess the relevance in that patient. The magazine would provide a monitoring service so that the doctor can pinpoint the particular hour when the patient is referring to it, which will give him a base from which to work.

The monitoring of press and TV will be carried out by the Medical Information Research Unit on a daily basis. They will put up a brief description of the news items along with source details and, if possible, contact points. Updation will be done on a daily basis with the press information available by about mid-morning.

Viable service
The view is that there is sufficient call for this sort of service to make it viable. They use regular on this as in the case of Prestel in the view of this service goods is the way these people find that they have sufficient feedback back to go ahead with the magazine.
CitiService adds more to financial package

A number of new features have been added to Prestel’s CitiService as part of the planned development of its business and financial services.

The first of these means that users will be able not only to obtain the daily prices of unit trusts, but also to buy and sell via the system.

Christopher Sharpeles, Chairman of CitiService, believes that this is a significant step. He comments: ‘CitiService users now have twice the amount of information and 24-hour access to financial information in the market.’

Mr. Sharpeles is confident that other units will also be fol-
sing suit. It is thought that businesses will soon realize the importance of electronic invoicing and stock control, sales orders and bank accounts — all this because of business and financial services.

Two other developments which are being introduced are the introduction of the London Metal Exchange price service and the Premier Financial Times service.

The London Metal Exchange price service will be displayed on the system throughout the year. The data for this service is obtained from Bodwell Wolff, the largest producer of the Metal Price Service.

User Richard Rea, a preparative member of the London Metal Exchange, said: ‘This is a welcome addition to our service. The company has similar facilities in Europe and the United States.’

Victor look to Prestel for growth

H J Victor Ltd, one of Europe’s largest clearance organisations, has turned to Prestel as a means of extending the marketing and developing business.

This is not the first company to look to Prestel to achieve these goals, but it is unique in the sense that it offers a H J Victor deal with surplus stock on a massive scale — something from golf balls to millions to apparel. Its Prestel service will feature the company’s current list of wants and offers and users will be able to reply to these via a response sheet.

New opportunity

Mr. Louis Kaplan of the Bank of Scotland notes: ‘The introduction of new opportunities for users is an important development. The company can now offer a much wider range of services to its customers.’

Skydata takes off

Following a period of research and development undertaken by Database in conjunction with PwC’s Flight Guide, Aircour Skydata has now been fully launched.

The service, which is based on the airborne data published in the Flight Guide, gives specific information for pilots on the facilities of the 150 listed airports. The service, which was initially run under the name Arcojet, reports some promising results after its initial testing period, when 20 of the airports were listed.

Each airport has a page for details of facilities, with additional pages for promotional material. Airlines subscribing to the service can relay any additional information which will be featured on the service pages.

TAFS

Of equal importance to pilots are the air traffic control reports and the Aircour Skydata is fully cross-referenced to the Met Office database.

This system guarantees accuracy for all aircraft, including Terminal Airfield Forecast Services (TAFS). Other ancillary data on the database includes Air Traffic Open Spot, which provides comprehensive coverage for airports, for example, easy access for weather and nautical chart information.

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Fill in the coupon if you want to wait for details. Or just go to page *88188# and Presel CitiService right now.
on-line insurance

insurance agents, Kingscroft Insurance, have introduced a new service based on Prestel’s response-trace facility. Dealing with all types of insurance, Kingscroft invites users to key in their requirements in order to obtain a quotation. In most cases, written quotations are sent out, but for subscribers to Enterprise the Medley facility can be used.

An independent service, Kingscroft deals with around 50 insurance companies. Quotations can be obtained via Prestel for motor, household and travel insurances and it is possible to arrange immediate travel cover using the response frame and testing in a credit card number for payment. A range of insurance is also given covering forms of insurance, including life and accident. Once a quotation has been received, it is again possible to accept it via Prestel.

Aden Hopkins of Kingscroft Insurance explained his company’s move into virtual technology. "It was already involved in Prestel from the user’s point of view and felt that we could offer a service which has not previously existed on the system,” Kingscroft can be located on page 37794.

Export help from VIA

The Videsco Industry Association, in its efforts to help promote UK machine tools overseas, particularly in America, has set up an office in New York.

The office, located in the centre of Manhattan and is available to UK companies wanting to demonstrate their products in the USA.

A democratisation facility includes the ability to set up trade missions and arrange visits to companies in the USA.

For further information contact the VIA on 415/ 22770 or Mailbox 01/140497.

Business views

Australia looks at Lawtel

Lawtel, the CUG service which provides information to members of the legal profession, was recently demonstrated at a Law and Technology seminar organised by the School of Law of the Queensland Institute of Technology.

The seminar, which began with a live teleconference link between Brisbane, Canberra, Sydney and London, was addressed by Lord Denning and Sir Richard Steyn.

The demonstration showed the value of the Lawnet service by enabling delegates to read summaries of cases decided in English courts within hours of their being reported in London. Reports of Statutory Instruments published in England were used in Brisbane weeks before most legal practitioners here, relying on more traditional sources, had even heard of their existence.

Lexis Link

The information contained within the Lawnet system is also supplemented by a Research Room from which the user can obtain assistance with specific legal research. This aspect of the service is currently being evaluated in conjunction with Butterworths, the leading legal publishing house.

This will give Lawnet users to the Butterworth Lexis mainframe computer located in Dayton, Ohio, where the information is maintained. Legal material is a user requesting specific research information will transmit his requirements via Prestel and will be able to receive full text printouts of materials from Butterworths. This has given many users access to the major sources within hours of the Lexis Link having been set up.

In addition, the user can choose from a wide range of topics and conditions, and order documents to be posted to him on a regular basis.

Prestel launch Telex link

In an extension to the Mailbox messaging service, Prestel has introduced Telex Link, a service which enables users to send a message via Mailbox to any UK telex terminal.

To ensure that users receive an efficient service, Telex Link is available initially to a Cloud User Group between 1000 and 2000 members. This initial restriction has been introduced to avoid overloading the system with the subsequent decline in performance that would result. Further developments are anticipated with the delay in the UK Telex terminal being implemented.

Prestel to take advantage of Telex link. As an added bonus, the service is also able to transmit messages to the Prestel Telex link, which is a feature that is not available in the Mailbox service.

Computer link

To send a message to the user key in his message in the normal way while he receives a message. A computer link converts the message from its screen format to the format required by the telex system. When the message is successfully transmitted, a ‘delivery confirmation’ message is sent to the user. If the message is not received, the system will send a second attempt to begin with any remaining messages.

Free membership

The cost of sending a telex link is 50p per line, regardless of length (maximum length is about 400 characters). Membership of the CUG is free. Exploratory papers on Telex Link, starting on page 3782, offer the user the opportunity to register interest in the service.

Stockbrokers

The price update service for stocks and shares is now available via Telex Link. This service is provided by the London Stock Exchange. For further information contact the LIFFE on 415/ 22770 or Mailbox 01/140497.

Business views

Election winners

Three employees of Pulver Train Technology Limited in Surrey have Margaret Thatcher to thank for the success of their company.

Just as she was being elected, the three employees, Stephen Christie, Stephen Neill and Peter Roberts, had signed up to the Prestel service. They had just bought a new colour television and were signing up to the Prestel service because it was the only company that had not already taken all their money.

The three employees were so impressed with the service that they decided to sign up for it. They were especially impressed with the fact that it was the only company that had not already taken all their money.

The service has been so successful that the three employees are now considering it for other purposes. They have already signed up for a number of other services, including the London Stock Exchange and the Daily Express.

Victor Ltd

The company responsible for the successful telex link is called Victor Ltd. It is located in Thanet and is a member of the London Stock Exchange. The company has a number of offices throughout the country, including London, Manchester, Bristol and Liverpool.

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Expansion without over-heards - One man’s solution

When husband and wife team Wally and Ellen Morgan decided the time had come to expand their retail business, they took what might seem to be an unusual step by turning to Prestel to achieve their aims. The Morgan’s shop, Scuttle, sits next to St Paul’s Cathedral in London and specialises in leading brands of gifts and accessories, kitchenware and gifts. Located in an area with a high office population, they found that most of their active customer base was during the lunch hour period. Added to this was the fact that, like many other small businesses, the recession was hurting trade. So, they recognised the need to take positive steps to expand their trade, but were reluctant to take the obvious route of either enlarging the existing premises or opening one or more new outlets with the associated commitments that involved. The real need was to attract more customers from a wider area than those who had hitherto used Wally to Wally to expand their customer base.

Textlet possibilities

Having already become interested in the possibilities offered to advertisers by the development of the so-called “textlets” by IBM, the Morgans felt that this was the opportunity to test the waters, since the main scale in Wally’s mind was whether people actually liked the advertisements or not. This was an exercise in finding out what people thought of the new technology in general. So, they decided to give it a try, and the results were encouraging. The Morgans felt that their decision to go ahead with the textlets was the right one, and they are still using the system today.

Wally proudly presented the demographic copy and graphics which, in fact, exceeded even their expectations. The textlet was a fair representation of most of the goods on offer, and was supported by a special offer of a 10% discount on all items, along the lines of mail order agencies.

Faith in Prestel

Not only does Wally have faith in Prestel for the new business, but he also preceived that it was something he could do without extra cost. They were pleased to find that the agreements were still there, and that the customers were as happy with the new deal as they had been with the old one. Wally thought it was a good move, and he has since expanded their customer base.

Personal touch

Wally said that he believed that with a customer like Wally, it is possible to do a lot more with the textlets. He said that the textlets were an interesting way of getting a message across to customers. The Morgans felt that the opportunity to test the system was the right one, and they are still using the system today.

SOLUTION

To begin with, we were convinced that we would need another shop, but we were also determined to take on the extra expenses of new issues, and not to go on unproductively considering the heavy investment that it would involve.

Now we need another shop. From our existing base we can reach the market but I feel we need to make some decisions very soon.

At present, we are looking to the future and the way we can expand our business, and we hope to launch a new service within the next six months. This service will be a continuation of the lunch of Club 400 and, in addition to the open access through the Vexcel pages (no 000293), a special deal by Club 400 customers will be included. This means that any Club 400 customer ordering an item through the service will receive a 10% discount. We hope this will encourage more people to use the service, and also to extend their knowledge of Prestel in general.

Buying books the Prestel way

A new service being offered by Walford Textile Books on Herts 400 is of particular interest to the growing number of home computer users involved in Prestel as well as to librarians and other regular book purchasers.

The service, starting 150 pages, offers a choice of over 2000 books on computing and computing applications. The catalogue includes the latest announcements from both British and US publishers highlighting details of selected new titles and best sellers.

The right time

Inspiration for the new service came at a meeting last year between Ian Dyer, editor of Herts 400, the Harcourts community newspaper, and John Dyer of Walford Textile Books. After further discussions involving Bill Farnier who, as well as managing Herts 400, also provides literature on information services to industry via his bibliographic library, it was decided that the idea might be worth examining. The specialist book ordering service on Prestel, boys Bill Farnier of Herts 400 and John Dyer of Walford Textile Books have a particular interest in education, especially computer-based education so we are very pleased to help develop a service of this kind at a time when there are signs of a big increase in educational use of Prestel.

Gateway

Users can place orders by completing a response form. Orders are then directed to the bookshop where they are processed on the new Telecommunications Order Service (TORS). This has been developed by the Telecommunications Order Service, which enables customers to order books from authorised booksellers via the Prestel system. New book orders are also handled at the established computer-based book ordering systems at the Prestel Gateway service. Orders are transmitted direct to publishers who can then deliver them.

Editing of the service was also carried out at the store by John Dyer to ensure that the books are up to date as possible. Payment will normally be made at the time of ordering by Access or Visa, but it is possible for schools, colleges, libraries, and other institutions to operate an account through the system. In addition, orders for up to the specialist catalogues can be made either by telephone or by mail.

Micronet million

In July, Micronet 800 became the first to achieve one million deliveries in a month.

This high level of success is expected to increase still further now that three more microcomputers - the Apple II and the Tandy TRS-80 and the Amstrad CPC - are added to the Micronet 800 database.

There has been some speculation that the Polls YTX 4000c television, which includes the TEX-400 Spectrum user access to Micronet 800 would not run alongside Demon_Dave and the Spectrum Microphone. It was thought that the Interface 1 and YTX 4000c might conflict with each other for resources, but micromicro, Technical Manager for Micronet 800, explained that “I think the YTX 400 and Interface I are compatible to the Spectrum, they operate independently and are separate in separate areas of the microns memory.”

Since the launch of Micronet, there has been an upsurge of interest in the use of Prestel by home computer enthusiasts. In the wake of the wide interest, a further range of services aimed at the micro user has emerged. One such service has been introduced by InfoQuest, a company who although new to the ranks of umbrella IFPs, has long seen the value of Prestel-based services. The new service, MicroRepertoire, is a home computer “comic” with pages covering both hardware and software.

New home computer ‘store’

Three more software houses have chosen Viewfax 256 as their vehicle for telesoftware sales on Prestel. Bug Byte programs such as ‘City Defences’ and ‘Galaxy Wars’ will be available as well as programs from Mayday Software and Camsoft.

The Micron program ‘Product’ comes just in time for the football season. This is a program for the BBC Micro that enables great enthusiasts to use their micro to forecast matches that will result in a draw, based on previous performance of the teams involved. A program is also available from private authors which allows the office preparation of Mailbox messages for later transmission, thus saving time and money.

Asen User magazine has also taken advantage of Viewfax 256’s wide user base to supply telesoftware readers taken from their magazine as a promotional tool. The Viewfax 256 pages are available to all Prestel users.

Telesoftware on Viewfax

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Asen User magazine has also taken advantage of Viewfax 256’s wide user base to supply telesoftware readers taken from their magazine as a promotional tool. The Viewfax 256 pages are available to all Prestel users.
Prestel picks the winners

With the steep increases season underway, those seeking to make a skittish "investment" could do worse than look into the Prestel Racing Service.

Certainly some of the tips given in the Racing Guide during the flat season proved to be very valid. For instance, on-the-basis before York's Elms Handicap, one of the season's most popular betting races, the guide described Jupiter Island's chances as "head on decent going". Bright they were indeed, with Lester Piggott bringing the horse to an easy victory at 11-1.

And for those wanting to play up their winnings on the Fiber, the guide had some advice for the latest Vogeltour Stakes which followed an hour later. This time Seymour Hicks won the home-highlighted and as predicted raced home to win.

The Racing Guide also contains the Bafta Free Handicap, now in its 55th year, and Woodstock and Racing Data's Ford Consultancy Service.

Rating system

Rating Private Handicapping is the professional's rating system which measures the relative chances of each horse declared at the four day declaration stage. It is particularly useful as an indication of where a horse with several assignments is "best at" the weights. The Punt Consultancy Service is provided from the analysis of samples, also "statistical" data, which is updated daily on Bloodstock and Racing Data's computer. The shows which horses can be regarded as "high probabilities" for "improvements". Of course, all of this is supported by data lists of runners and riders, with a full results service and comprehensive past performance cards on all major events being supplied by Mesic.

As well as these open access pages, Prestel Racing also has a private service. Already highly regarded by top professionals such as Independent Stakes Players Group, Limited Brian Hilditch and top international jockey Steve Cauthen, this ensures a range of specialist information. Four day declaration and overnights are available shortly after they close, the racing plan of leading jockeys are updated daily and bloodstock and breeding information is also carried.

For round off the package on Prestel Racing, a range of advertising features hotels for racing weekends, racecourse guides, special rates for hotel stays—often John Francis's bar and chip shop! Everything, in fact, that the keen racegoer could need to know. "Prestel Racing can be found on page 522.

Out and about with Supabetes

Information on the National Express Superbus' services are now available on Prestel. Supabetes, which was launched earlier this year, offers coach bookings to destinations throughout Europe. Travel to over 120 places in Europe and North America can be booked from major National Express offices or from any of their 3,000 agents throughout the country.

Competitive approach

Since the launch of the new service, which offers coach companies to take a more competitive approach in business, coach travel has become an increasingly attractive proposition, particularly for long distance travel and with a number of companies offering all-inclusive, door-to-door travel packages. The service is available at all National Express offices.

Full backing

Supabetes has the full backing of National Express, including its own coach operators and experienced staff. The service is available at all National Express offices.

Armchair grocer

The Club 403 Armchair Grocer is packed not so much as a replacement that supermarket rival, but as taking some of the drudgery out of shopping for groceries. There are certain items—vegetables, fruit, rolls, and fine cuts—which are standard repeat purchases. These items can also be delivered to the door, on a sliding scale from nothing to two, four, six, and ten items.

Another service now in Club 403 includes a wide range of games, puzzles and competitions, supported by a stunning service of magazines when they introduce Share-a-Joke (page 520) on their children's pages. Children are invited to send their favourite jokes to win a badge. Each month, someone at Family Living has the opportunity of selecting the best joke, and the winner receives a prize.

Surprise

Although Share-a-Joke has been around for a while now, Family Living were quite surprised by the reaction to a recent innovation. As well as sending jokes by post, children are now able to send their jokes with the opportunity to send their jokes via a response form. It was anticipated that only a small amount of children would actually do this, but in fact they have gone over almost 100% to the response form method, with very few not doing anything at all. Obviously the idea of sending a letter is a novel experience to most children.

Have you ever considered how much easier life could be? How to...Shop from the comfort of your own home. Have easy access to some banks and building societies. Find out quickly whether the plane is on time. Check there are no roadworks in the area. Keep in touch with your children's school. Send messages via the TV screen. Make and confirm theatre bookings... and lots more besides.
Club 525 brings benefits to house agents and buyers

The business of moving house can be a trying one at the best of times. It is made still worse when the move is to another part of the country, which involves juggling the sale of one property and the purchase of another some distance away.

Finding a property in a place you don’t know in usually a question of travelling to the area, touring estate agents and viewing properties. If all this time has been accomplished at weekends, it can become a very long drawn-out process indeed.

It was a recognition of this need to overcome these problems, plus a desire to respond to criticisms often levied at estate agents of poor service and indifference to their clients’ needs which led to the formation of Club 525 Housefinder.

Club 525 is a round-the-clock guide to homes around the country which, in date, supported by agents in over 360 towns and cities. It enables an agent to offer his business contacts the latest details of properties in any part of the country. Thus, if an agent is handling a sale for a customer, he can also offer assistance in the search for a new property, even if he does not know the area required himself.

Property details—price, number of rooms, location and price of property—are listed on the system. The agent can keep the type of property by specifying minimum requirements, such as price range. The amount of information listed on each entry is sufficient to enable a prospective buyer to decide if he wants to know more. The response-frame facilities enable the agent to request printed details or even arrange an appointment to view.

Club 525 updates the information on the service daily, which means that a new instruction can be on display within 24 hours of its first being received by the agent.

To the prospective purchaser the service offers the opportunity to eliminate some of the trial and error work involved in the hunt for a new home. It also means that details of the house he is selling are available to a much wider audience outside of the immediate area.

The benefit to the agent is the increased level of service he can offer to attract new business. The home buyer is under no obligation and the viewing service is generally offered free of charge. The income can be considerable, in that the agent can collect a fee each time he sells a property, which can bring him in more business.

Managing Director of Club 525, Richard Griffiths, speaking at the launch of this service, said that it would make the search for a house much faster and easier.

Information Providers: Take the Headaches out of Editing

As an offline editing system, Owl Editel allows you to prepare and test layouts and routings locally, then transmit them at speed, saving time, money and frustration.

- Offline creation, storage and linking of text and images
- On-line transmission of layouts and images
- Managing changes in locations, fonts and sizes
- Includes off-line editing
- Publish and coordinate layout and content changes

- Many options available, eg. creating content, checking fonts and sizes, inserting images and linking to other applications

Owl Micro-Communications Ltd
The Mettings, Station Road, Steeple Gidding,
Oundle, Cambridgeshire
Tel: 07237 23348

TRAVEL NEWS

500 trained on Skytrack

The Dartford branch of Walsall-based travel group Wakefield Fortunes became the 500th agency to be trained on the Skytrack service since its launch in April.

Claire Holman, Manager of Dartford, said she had been delighted with the system. ‘It is ideal. Not only can we make our airline bookings using Skytrack, but we can also book our hotel accommodation and train and coach tickets.’

Head for the slopes with Standby 321

With the winter sports season fast approaching, travel and leisure specialists Standby 321 are repeating their popular ski guide.

Compiled by the editors of The Mail on Sunday and The Sun, the guide provides all the information needed to plan your ski trip to the slopes.

Another two national travel boards have added information to the VMS database (page 84), which already includes a wide range of tourist information from countries as far as Austria and Zimbabwe.

The two new additions are Finland and the French Riviera. On Finland there is a comprehensive range of information on the country itself, how to get there, internal travel, hotels and tour operators offering package holidays. From Finland the Finnish national airlines offer information on seat availability, routes and times.

The French Riviera Tourist Board initially offers around twenty five frames of information giving details of main towns in the area, type of accommodation available, major hotels and sports. As the French Riviera is renowned for its winter ski resorts and summer holidays, it may yet enter as a surprise to many that the broker offers virtually round the year ski holidays.

Each of the local tourist offices is listed with telephone numbers and it is envisaged that eventually each will provide more detailed information on their individual towns. The database also includes how to get there, information on details of ski resorts and rail routes as well as airline information.
Skytrack marks important step for Iberia

Iberia, the Spanish national airline which ranks as the third largest in Europe, has become the latest addition to the Skytrack service. For Iberia, this marks the latest step in a series of planned developments aimed at improving the services it offers. The improvements plan, which was launched two years ago with a detailed study of the airline's market, has been geared to the needs of the business traveller. It covers all aspects of the airline's services, from receipt of travel requests at the start of the journey to the final destination.

The airline regards the British business market as an important target area for the service. The Skytrack network now covers 26 cities in Spain, 24 in Europe, 15 in the Americas and 11 in Africa and the Middle East—a network which has doubled to 800 flights per week.

The establishment in Latin America marks the airline's commitment to reaching the full range of destinations. This is an important step in the airline's strategy to strengthen its presence in the region.

Join the Londoners

A weekend break in London is a popular choice for anyone wanting a few days' sightseeing, shopping and generally enjoying all the facilities our capital has to offer. Of course, one of London's greatest attractions is its wide range of top quality entertainment and many people feel that their stay would not be complete without a visit to a theatre or concert hall. Recognising this, Keith Prowse, the ticket booking specialists, have devised their 'Londoners' package deal. This offers a range of weekend breaks, with the unique feature that the cost of every break includes a theatre ticket and restaurant booking.

Join the Londoners...

The Londoners brochure contains details of all the available venues—including plays, music, opera, ballet and concerts. The brochure is updated every month to ensure that this information is as accurate as possible. Those wishing to know what is available can contact the Londoners on 01-730 3400. The brochure is updated every two months to include new and updated information.

Holidays with a difference

Two weeks of sunning on a beach is not necessarily everyone's idea of the perfect holiday. For those who view their holiday time as an opportunity to broaden their experience, try new things, even embark on adventure, the 'Twisters World holidays recently introduced on the scene can be the answer. Travellers describe their holidays as 'wildlife, cultural and wilderness journeys'. Features are Forestry in their American and Canadian programmes, which cover a range of activities such as specialist birdwatching tours, an Alaska crooning expedition, Grand Canyon rafting and diving in Florida. The brochure gives full graphic descriptions of the holidays, plus dates and prices. The brochure requests frame enables holders can join a new 'French Connection'.

Exotic destinations

Holidays are managed by 'Twisters World travel' Limited, commenting on the expanding market for adventure packages, and his delight in seeing part of the 'Twisters World' programme in their candidates. The rate of availability to both the general public and the trade alike is a far cry from a few years ago when it was so difficult to find general information on exotic destinations. The 'Twisters World' programme started in 1985.

The French connection

The connection is, in fact, with St Malo, the premier Brittany port and tourist centre. It was established following negotiations with the Air France Line. Air France Line reports that the reaction from tourists to this new service is very positive and it is hoped that by the end of the year, there will be at least 15 changes of service on the St Malo route.
**Prestel at work**

The broadening scope of Prestel as it becomes accepted as a business tool

In the business world, Prestel has gained its widest acceptance to date as an information system—a source of stationery, regularly updated, comprehensive information, company facts.

With a quarter of a million pages available, the amount and diversity of this information meets virtually every need.

But it is the system as an effective means of access to a library and, above all, to information, that is gaining its potential as a valuable business tool. A growing number of users have discovered that there is a flexibility inherent in the basic Prestel system which enables it to be adapted to almost every specific usage.

One such example is Private Prestel—Superflexibly, it differs very little from the public service—an Information Provider puts up pages of information which are then accessed via Prestel monitors by the users. The first difference is the cost to the Information Provider, which is half of that of the cost of becoming an IP on public Prestel, partly due to the fact that the minimum number of pages rented is also halved. The second, and decisive difference is that the pages are available only to nominated users, with no information at all appearing on the public system. Even the name of the IP is omitted from the index.

What Private Prestel offers is a low-cost, versatile information system, with the additional benefit to the user of having access to the public Prestel. The Prestel remains a great service for the user and is putting considerable marketing effort behind it. They have identified their primary target market as being those organizations which operate administratively from a head office base but which employ a number of personnel located remotely from that base—typically sales forces operating on a day-to-day basis from home.

**Viable alternative**

A typical scenario is that, in order to acquire information, the user must spend most of his day on the road. Easy-to-use communication has to be maintained, of course. But this scenario is not limited to those who are required to travel, however, for there are a number of interesting situations where Private Prestel can be used effectively.

Cost-effective and cost-effective alternatives.

Set-up costs are kept to a minimum, with editing equipment based at head office and the information delivered via Prestel's access service. The design of the system is such that the information is easy to update and maintain, and the system is flexible enough to accommodate changes in the way the service is used.
with bank and building society computers to enable various financial transactions to take place.

In the domestic sector, a factor which has inhibited the growth of the system has been its cost but the recent work offers a contrasting picture. Prestel is quoted frequently as a cost effective and practical alternative to private video and direct links. When the Gateway facility is brought into play, this factor becomes even more significant.

**Access for brokers**

The friends of Prestel and business company choose a Prestel Gateway service to cover the country, despite their unsuitable computer terminals. The GLACED system was already providing computing power to the company’s own computing facilities, to such an extent that its boost was a “boost of every brand”. It provided considerable resources to the branch, resources which Prestel provided access to extend, at least in part, to their agents and brokers.

After three years of experiment with portable terminals, the interest in the service was firmly established, but the equipment being tested included too many limitations to be of use. Originally a teleprinter was used, which was able to transmit the regular information but because of the lack of a visual display unit it was too slow.

The installation of computer terminals had to be carried out on its own grounds but the use of Prestel with a Gateway link for GLACED provided a flexible solution and so Prestel emerged. They are now over 300 of such terminals operated by brokers around the country on Prestel.

The system is used to obtain instant quotations on over 200 types of policy. Instead of a “go” Pimrose in a response frame and the computer sends back the quote—all within a matter of seconds. In addition, the system can provide a range of information including a comparison of methods of mortgage repayments.

Another typical application of a Gateway facility is to use a computer to store and match details of policies and claims. Thus a user wanting a particular service will base his specific requirements and the computer will search the database for anyone who can meet those requirements.

**Transport service**

A practical illustration of this is Prestel’s Datafreight, a service aimed both at companies requiring transport freight and at shippers of goods. Originally a system operated internally by H vH, that became available to all the transport industry on a whole on Prestel at the end of 1982 and now has almost 120 members.

For transport companies it offers the chance to find goods for vehicles which would otherwise be making return journeys empty. Similarly, companies for whom goods can identify hauliers with transport available on the routes they require. The hauliers list their availability on the system and when a shipper claims a “which”, by filling in a response frame and the computer sends back the quote—all within a matter of seconds. In addition, the system can provide a range of information including a comparison of methods of mortgage repayments.

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**Alliance**

As an increasing number of business transactions are becoming computer-based, the alliance between Prestel and a management computer can work to benefit both the operator of the computer and the potential user of the service. There are cases where a computerized service—such as an entire rent booking system—will not generally fit for the smaller user. This not only puts obstacles in the way of the user, but also limits to an extent the available market for the system. Skyscap, for example, is enabling those travel agencies whose business does not warrant the investment in a computer terminal to benefit of computerized ticket booking. This works to the benefit of the travel agencies who can offer a better service and the airline, which can look to increase its business.

**World of publishing**

A similar situation exists within the world of publishing and bookkeeping. Telefunding Limited operate a computer-based system to simplify the process of handling orders between bookkeepers and suppliers such as publishers, distributors and publishers. The system works by bookkeepers entering their requirements using International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN) and Standard Book Numbers (SBN), although a code can be ordered by quoting a code and SBN the best offer. The terminal stores orders until due processing time, after which they are transmitted overnight by means of the computer. Orders are processed and two days produced, one of return for transmission to publishers (who then being transmitted directly to their own computer), the other containing confirmed orders, with available message for receipt by bookkeepers.

This system offers considerable advantages to bookkeepers, enabling them to offer a higher standard of customer service. The drawback, however, is the necessity for the bookkeeper to get the terminal installation.

This was a gap which both Telefunding and the Bookkeepers Association were keen to plug and to the Telefunding Publishing System was developed. A Prestel Gateway link enabled the efficient bookkeepers to use the Telefunding system using only a Prestel terminal. The user of the system enjoys the current data of status which the terminal user. The only real difference is that when a terminal, the Prestel system does not have the facility to issue orders for overprint transmittals and when ordering via the terminal bookkeepers must go to the ISBN in all cases.

**Inherent flexibility**

So Prestel has come a long way from being accepted as an information system pure and simple, and although it seems this will continue to be the primary function, its inherent flexibility will open up many new applications. Certainly we can expect to see a user playing an important role in a growing number of computer-based systems.
Keep us posted

In the first issue we said we would like to hear what you thought of the new style directory and magazine. Well, dear reader, you’ve done it, and we are very happy to report that on the whole your reaction was very enthusiastic.

We did discover one slight problem when we asked on-screen for comments. In that number of users had not received their copies. Naturally, we did not want to be discourteous to those who had written to us, so we asked on-screen for comments in the next issue. To those who had not received their copies, we apologize, and we hope you will forward your comments to the Preston directories.

And from the Preston directories, a thank you to all those who have taken the trouble to write to us. We are glad you liked the new layout and design, and we hope you will continue to support us with your feedback.

From Mr. A. W. Barnes, Foreign Exchange Manager of Privatgasbank Ltd.

Thank you for sending us the Preston directories. I am glad that you are interested in them, and I hope that you will continue to support us with your comments.

From Mr. W. Preston of Herts.

Although I have the covers and the editorial content, I like the new format. It seems much more user-friendly, and I hope you will continue to support us with your comments.

From Mr. B. C. Stone, Leighton Buzzard.

Congratulations on your new directory—a great improvement.

The new approach makes the directory more interesting and easier to use. We are delighted to hear that you like it, and we hope you will continue to support us with your comments.

And finally, to those of you who write to us, and of course, to those of you who read our magazines, we are glad you have enjoyed them. We hope you will continue to support us with your comments.

Send your letters to:

The Editor, Preston Magazine. 14 Hayley Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 9JE

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Send your letters to:

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We are looking forward to hearing from you again soon!

DON’T HIDE YOUR INFORMATION ON PRESTEL

Promote it in the PRESTEL DIRECTORY

The Apple II downloder from Owl

A new software download from Owl Micro-Communications lets Apple II users take advantage of the increasing number of software programs becoming available via Prestel and other private viewdata systems. With the range of educational, games and utility software expanding, this is particularly relevant to users in the field of education.

The new download program operates in conjunction with the existing Owl Micro-Communications Prestel, and provides a direct interface between the Apple and Prestel, and will be offered as an enhancement option to Owl or as an upgrade package for existing Owl users. Direct from Prestel

The software download allows an Apple user to run programs which have been obtained directly from Prestel. It is simple to use and can be downloaded, read, and run on a user’s computer. There are special programs for Prestel for these programs, including several sections of specialized software packages.

Special pages

Programs are placed on Prestel, in the form of viewdata frames, and can be downloaded and run on a user’s computer. There are special pages on Prestel for these programs, including several sections of specialized software packages.

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New technology for East Midlands

East Midlands Airport is using the latest information technology to convert the manual distribution of schedules and other key data into a total computerised information system for all airport services from Air Traffic Control to private homes and offices.

The system, which includes an automatic link to the American Express Skyguide on Prestel, was designed and installed by Jordan Electronics and contains a complete seasonal schedule.

Microprocessors automatically extract the appropriate information for each type of end user and transmit it to text screens. A typical format is used for all airport services such as departures and arrivals, large format display gives passengers flight information and a telephone link sends information to American Express for inclusion on Skyguide.

Automatic updates

As information moves to Skyguide on the system changes, the alterations are automatically passed through for updating on Prestel. The changes are transmitted initially via the Packet Switched Service to the American Express computer in Brighton, which converts them to the correct format and sends them on to the Prestel computer. So the flight information available on Prestel is up to date at the airport. The information on the airport system is updated by Air Traffic Control who edit the daily schedule as updated information on new times, additional flights and the like becomes available. ATC and meteorological information is used to produce the computer print-out, scheduling and recording of data. An additional editing terminal at the Information Desk enables other flight information such as boarding gates and delays to be added.

This system will be expanded as the airport expands and will ultimately carry the Air Traffic Log. Eventually all information sources will be combined in one system.

A new viewdata information provider system designed to run on the British-built Torch microcomputer has been developed by Mazzota Viewdata Systems. Using the system, the Mazzota-IP, the microcomputer becomes a powerful terminal with editing capability, bulk update and on-line data facility and local storage of user data bases.

As well as the usual Prestel editing facilities, the Mazzota-IP incorporates advanced word processing capabilities. WP and editing features include full word wrap with colour attributes. Left, right, top and bottom margins enable the user to restrict activity to a part of the screen and editing can be carried out within the margins while the user is still fully protected. By using margin together with word wrap, text can be entered into areas of the screen by normal typing and no uncorrected errors are necessary.

A block movement facility allows the editor to reposition any portion of the screen, duplicate it in another position or on another screen, or to duplicate it in another position on another page of the database. A column mode facility allows complete columns to be entered at a time, speeding up the creation of backgrounds and defining coloured areas.

Design philosophy

Speaking about the new system, Graham Hawker of Mazzota said that the system had been designed to make updating a viewdata system as easy as possible. "The design philosophy is based on the principle that local storage and databases editing is far more flexible and easier to control. We have built in extensive facilities to ensure that local copies of the database are always kept up to date. Mazzota-IP supports all the facilities of Prestel, with some extra features on top. Mazzota uses the system as an effective means of introducing the Prestel to office onto existing terminals."

Easy editing

The provision of a set of two scratch pads makes editing easier. These can be used to store logos, graphic designs etc for merging into new frames. A unique feature of the Mazzota-IP is the facility to merge information stored on scratch pads into the blank spaces on existing frames.

Torch system from Metrotel

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Starter pack from Sony

Sony (UK) Limited are offering a Viewdata Starter Pack aimed at organisations training either a viewdata system on a particular application on a bureau.
The pack consists of a range of Sony viewdata equipment, including viewdata terminal, printer and keyboard, which are available at around 70% of the normal retail or rental rates. This special offer is aimed at enabling new and existing users of viewdata to expand their system at a reduced cost and to promote wider investment in viewdata services.

New printer plus special deal from Integrex

Integrex Limited, a company manufacturing colour printers, has announced a new Viewdata/normal printer model VXE50. In the viewdata mode, the VXE50 is loaded from the terminal tape output (dealt supplied) or RS232. Up to two viewdata pages may be stored and printed out individually, or side by side. Print time for one page is 18 seconds, and for two pages, 36 seconds.
In the normal mode the viewdata interface becomes a 5.5kbytes buffer. Print speed is 100 characters per second—bi-directional with 46 plus print fonts, orange plain paper. It is available in tractor and friction plus tractor versions. The tractor version is priced at £425 plus VAT.

Price reduction
The company has also announced a significant reduction in the price of the SPXCEL viewdata colour printer. Originally priced at £2,750 plus VAT, the printer will now be sold for £2,500 plus VAT. This move brings the SPXCEL price down to that of black and white printer prices and in line with the new RS232 viewdata/normal printer price for the BBC microcomputer.

Interface package for Transtex Krypton

A Prestel interface package is now available for the Transtex Krypton series of microcomputers. Known as SIFON, the Prestel package has been developed by APN Software, the London-based software house.
No additional hardware is required with the SIFON package—all the user has to do is plug in an appropriate Prestel modem into the existing serial port provided as standard on the Krypton series. Features of the SIFON package include simplified display, printing, store and retrieve capabilities. Two Prestel pages can be displayed simultaneously so that, for example, menu lists can be displayed on screen for reference while options are investigated.
There is also an on-line directory display so that disc files can be located quickly without having to leave Prestel. The user can choose to highlight any Prestel display attribute, such as coloured text or double-height characters, on a monochrome microcomputer screen.
Any Prestel page can be printed out locally on the Transtex microcomputer for filing or reference at a later stage. Prestel pages can be stored on, and recalled from, disc. Stored pages can thus be recalled to the screen for printing or display off-line. In addition, as data can be stored directly on disc, the information can be easily processed by application packages, or included in documents and reports. Equally, as text files prepared in advance can be sent via Prestel, long messages can be prepared off-line.
The SIFON package has full Internet downloads capability, which has the potential of allowing a user, regardless of cost-effective source of software.
The SIFON is available through the Transtex dealer network and more information can be obtained from ANU Software Ltd (01-987 3113).

Exhibition diary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intertel Europe Ltd</td>
<td>21-23 November</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>02-04 November</td>
<td>London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electronic Industries Exhibition</td>
<td>02-04 November</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Video &amp; Electronics</td>
<td>02-04 November</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claspe &amp; Polin Europe Ltd</td>
<td>02-04 November</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software Expo</td>
<td>02-04 November</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Line Conferences</td>
<td>02-04 November</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int Video Communication Exhibition</td>
<td>02-04 November</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVC Handbook</td>
<td>02-04 November</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro-Computer Show</td>
<td>02-04 November</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX Mornicent (1-981 3905)</td>
<td>02-04 November</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int One · Show Information</td>
<td>02-04 November</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition</td>
<td>02-04 November</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Computer Christmas Fair</td>
<td>02-04 November</td>
<td>London</td>
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</tbody>
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