TELECOMPUTING IN JAPAN

Database Promotion Center, Japan.

1985 - The First Year of Telecomputing in Japan

Large-scale telecomputing in Japan dates only from 1985, but development of electronic mail and bulletin board systems has been rapid since then ASCII-NET and Japan Air Lines JALNET are described in some detail, along with the many mini systems run largely by personal computer enthusiasts.

The world's first experimental bulletin board system (BBS), the CBBS/CHICAGO, was started in the United States on February 16, 1978. The following year, The Source and CompuServe, two large U.S. online database services boasting hundreds of thousands of users, started to offer BBS services to the general public.

Prior to March 31, 1985, there were no companies in Japan carrying out telecomputing servies on a large-scale commercial basis. What little telecomputing there was at that time was being done by personel computer (PC) enthusiasts on an experimental basis.

However, following the revisions to the Telecommunications Business Law and the privatization of Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Public Corporation (NTT) on April 1, 1985, PC and users began calling for the construction of BBS stations and business enterprises started campaigning for the right to commercialize telecomputing systems, which they saw as the new form of electronic communications most likely to catch on in the future. For these reasons, 1985 has been labelled the "First Year of Telecomputing" in Japan.

The revision of the Telecommunications Business law created the basis for the development of telecomputing networks in Japan, and BBS stations capable of providing electronic mail and electronic bulletin board services have been springing up all over the country ever since (See Table 1).

Not all of these telecomputing systems are operated by individual or groups of PC enthusiasts; a number of systems intended for the commercial market have also been set up here. These soon-to-be commercialized systems have already boosted the number of passwordholding telecomputing service users into the tens of thousands. For example, the ASCII-NET, a telecomputing system started in May, 1985, by the ASII Corporation, one of Japan's leading software houses, had attracted more than 4,000 users within four months of being put into

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(As of February 1986)

Table 1. Major Telecomputing Systems OPC Networks) Operated by Individuals or PC Groups

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THE NET	System House Dut	Hokkaldo	(011)-612-0270	February, 1984	
DAC APPLE MINI DATARASE	Delletons Annie Club	Iwate	(0191)-23-0056	January, 1983	
			1050-15-190101	February 1085	
Tulip	Individual and in the second sec	IOCN I GI	0714-70-160701	106	
JOSAI -BBS	Individual	Saitama	(0492)-86-2235	C861	77
MCN	Individual	Chiba	(0471)-85-1088	April, 1985	
Night Club Nagarevama	Individual	Chiba	(0471)-59-4535	1985	Just
Kashiwa BBS	Individual	Chiba	(0471)-33-2605	1985	Just
The Micro-Net	The Micro-Net Secretariat	Gummo	(0273)-26-5221	January, 1986	
CANS STEP 2	Chiyoda Joban Microcomputer Club	Tokyo	(0473)-42-0584	January, 1984	2
JADA Telenort	Japan Amateur Data Communications Association	Tokyo	(03)-797-3946	June, 1984	4
Jug-BBS	Jug-CP/M	Tokyo	(03)-426-8234	January, 1985	5
Kanto Central	Individual	Tokyo	(0473)-79-0098	May, 1985	3
Mac Event Network	Individual	Tokyo	(0473)-97-0922	January, 1985	-
Microcomputer Communications	Japan Microcomputer Club	Tokyo	(03)-438-1869	December, 1984	45
Network "Halley"	Japan Amateur Astronomers Association	Tokyo	(03)-545-4921	February, 1985	
ODSY (ODESSEY)	PROSHUMA Co., Ltd.,	Tokyo	(03)-232-6060	September, 1984	5
Personal-Unix-Net	Individual	Tokyo	(03)-924-2593	May, 1985	-
160	Toel Kikaku, Ltd.	Tokyo	(03)-710-7753	September, 1984	
TNICS	Sakako	Tokyo	(03)-433-1422	January, 1985	3
EXE	Ochanomizu & Nakano Microcomputer Club	Tokyo	(03)-381-81 39	June, 1985	5
XMM/UX-BBS	Individual	Tokyo	(03)-729-8833	May, 1985	14
THE BOARD	Epson User's Club	Tokyo	(03)-351-4910	June, 1985	43
JUPITER	Gijutsu Hyoronsha Co., Ltd.	Tokyo	(03)-237-8315	1985	80
SHC-NET	SAP Club	Tokyo	(03)-376-8768	1985	20
Minarva	PC World Japan	Tokyo	(03)-551-3882	1985	160
THE SUCCESS	Individuel	Kanagawa	(045)-782-4949	Apr 11, 1984	40
Odawara Microcomputer Club -	Odeware Microcomputer Club	kanagawa	(0465)-23-3330	March, 1984	4
Microcomputer Center					
JATIC	Individue!	Kanagawa	(0427)-47-4545	1985	7
Yokohama Totsuka BBS	Individual	Kanagawa	(045)-891-6722	1985	
JADA Teleport Western Jepan	JADA Kansal	Osak a	(96)-976-1148	June, 1985	w
Tezukayama Microcomputer	Telecom Division, Tezukayana Microcomputer	Osaka	(06)-674-1933	1985	Ξ
Club	Club				1
Gullivers' House	Individual	Osaka	(0720)-54-5125	1985	
WEST SIDE SKYNET	West Side Software House	ofioAH	(06)-436-2799	May, 1985	9
NTT-VLC NETWORK SYSTEM	VLC N.V.N.S. Co., Ltd.	Shimane	(0852)-27-7700	1985	20
FUKUYAMA-CBBS	Fukuyeme Microcomputer Club	Hiroshima	(0849)-22-1792	1985	16
COMEL	IIzuka Microcomputer Club Network	Fukuoka	(0948)-22-5486	1985	.,
COARA	Oita Telecomputing Amateur Research Society	01 1.0	(0975)-33-0220	1985	Ξ
	Western Japan Microcomputer Data				

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Source - Japan Computer Quarterly

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operation. Although still in the testing stage, ASCII-NET is Japan's largest and most successful telecomputing network. As of February 1986, there were 12,000 users taking advantage of the services offered via ASCII-NET.

Even taking into consideration the fact that there are probably numerous telecomputing service users in Japan who subscribe to more than one service, it is estimated that there are around 20,000 people currently using these services here. And this number is expected to continue to grow in the future.

ASCII-NET

The BBS stations offering telecomputing services in Japan consist of two major types: those established and operated by companies as part of their overall operations, and those set up and run by individuals and PC groups.

The company systems include ASCII-NET established by ASCII Corporation; JALNET operated by Japan Air Lines Co. Ltd., a system called POPCOM-NET established and operated by Shogakkan Publishing Co. Ltd., and JANIS, a system offered by Honda Trading Corporation (See Table 2).

Let us take a closer look at ASCII-NET, which within one year of its establishment grew to become the largest telecomputing system in Japan. ASCII-NET was started up on May 1, 1985. Since then, users have been signing up at the incredible rate of 1,000 per month, raising the total number of users by the end of February, 1986 to 12,000. These users range in age from their low teens to over 60, the average age working out to roughly 32.5 years old (See Figure 1). The distribution of users within Japan is equally broad in scope. Approximately 60% of ASCII-NET users are from Tokyo and surrounding areas (Saitama, Chiba, etc.). The next highest concentrations are from the Kinki and Chubu regions, respectively, with the remainder of users coming from areas scattered throughout Japan.

The ASCII-NET makes use of DEC minicomputers and VAX/785 as its host computer, and is expected to enter full-scale commercial operation in the near future. At present, however, it is still being test operated. this is because ASCII Corporation had no previous experience operating telecomputing systems, and it is only through actual test operation that it has been able to determine the various forms of utilization possible, the optimum safety and security measures and major application trends. A sufficiently long test period is necessary to gain experience in operating the system and to iron out any technical difficulties that exist prior to putting the ASCII-NET into full-scale

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Name of System	Сотралу	Telephone No.	Start-up Date	Users	Special Features
JALKET	Japan Air Lines Co., Ltd.,	(03)-284-2765	July, 1984	2,000	Provides information on everythi domestic and international flig tours, to special articles sold b
SINC	Honda Trading Corporation	(03)-253-6465	November, 1984	1,500	Originally begun as a learning sy the Source; provides services in
ASCII-NET	ASCII Corporation	(03)-486-7111	May, 1985	10,000	Japan's largest single telecc network system; upgraded host functions in December, 1985.
Telestar	Telestar	(03)-375-5784	Apr11, 1985	5,000	Information providers include Shimbun Nevspaper Co., Tokyo Shimposhe, Lidu, Japan Travei Inc., and Hitachi Lidu
POPCOM-NET	Shogakkan Publishing Co., Ltd.	(03)-263-6995	July, 1985	450	This system is designed to servinton pipeline between re- information pipeline between re- the PC megazine "POPCON" an publication's editorial departmen
Leisure Map Online System	Kokusal Iravel Bureau Co., Ltd.	(052)-242-7018	May, 1985	500	This is the largest telecomputin in the Chub region of Japan. Con for the primary purpose of exc tor the primarion with frave located throughout the Chubu regi-
EYE-NET	Fujimic Corporation	(03)-359-6401	November, 1985		Data support from the Fujl Sankel
Contcon	Date Brein Co., Ltd.	(06)-376-1053	December, 1984	950	Expanded version of "Sair telecomputing system run by the University PC Club started th Protessor fujiwara.
JAPCOM J&P HOT LINE	Joshin Denki Co., L†d.	(06)-644-5550	July, 1985	1,500	Telecomputing system operated largest chain of PC shops in the area; aimed at users in the region.

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