

carry a full range of communication and entertainment products directly to consumers and businesses, with business as the initial target.

MCI, with \$12 billion in annual revenue, holds 18 percent of the U.S. long-distance market, compared with AT&T's 60 percent. The MCI announcement follows news of similar multibillion-dollar spending plans from several other American cable and telephone companies.

These plans assume some form of convergence of telephone, computer and television technologies, but the eventual configuration is far from clear. Moreover, financial analysts are questioning the wisdom of some of the huge expenditures planned. One recent private estimate was that a completed nationwide information superhighway would require more than \$400 billion in private investment.

MCI's president, Bert Roberts, said Tuesday that the strategic alliance announced last year between MCI and British Telecommunications PLC, calling for BT to invest \$4.3 billion in MCI, would provide the largest part of the additional cash needed for the superhighway investments.

MCI will probably spend at least \$10 billion itself, he said, with the unidentified partners providing the rest.

British Telecom not only would get the U.S. profits from its 20 percent stake in MCI but also would seek to extend the technological advances and communications services that it provides beyond the Western Hemisphere. Mr. Roberts said at a news conference.

Globally, MCI and BT will be battling AT&T, which announced in May 1993 that it would invest \$100 million in an international group of phone companies to offer telecommunications services to companies around the world.

Already, MCI said Tuesday, it has upgraded and expanded about half of its U.S. long-distance network by using advanced fiber optic cable and software and a new generation of switching equipment. It said the full domestic upgrade would be completed by the end of this year and extend to lines across the Atlantic and Pacific in 1995.

The upgrading last month of a New York Los Angeles fiber optic link, for example, allows the National Science Foundation, one of the largest users of the global Internet computer network, to transmit data at 2.5

billion bits a second, 15 times the previous speed, MCI said.

The foundation's network carries a volume of data each month equivalent to the holdings of the Library of Congress, America's central library.

In the next year, MCI said, further upgrades will permit an improvement to 10 billion bits a second. The primary beneficiaries would be businesses, research facilities, universities and government agencies whose computers increasingly are linked by Internet.

Paul F. Horvitz and Robert C. Siner

News in Brief

Best's New Patriot Line of Power Protectors

Best Power Technology Pte Ltd. of Singapore recently unveiled its Patriot line of power protection devices. The series is available in 250VA and 400VA models and is designed to protect PCs, file servers, point-of-sale terminals and fax machines.

Users can tell its operating status from LEDs which indicate when battery backup is on, and when battery power is low. Additionally, the operating conditions of On Battery, Low Battery and Shutdown are communicated via three audible alarms.

The 250VA unit provides 8.5 minutes of runtime at full load and 25 minutes at half load whereas the 400VA unit provides five minutes at full load and 15 minutes at half load. The products are UL 1449 surge suppression listed. The test is designed to ensure that the product stops surges before they damage equipment.

Anti-virus software

Cat Computer Services of India has come out with an improvised version of Quick Heal, an anti-virus software. Some of the new advanced features included in Quick Heal Ver 2.0 are as follows.

- Total security from any present and future boot/partition viruses.
- Ability to rebuild the partition and boot record damaged due to multiple infection of viruses.
- Can cure and save the data from corrupted files, infected by viruses such as DIR-II.

(d) Facility to have backup of system areas (partition table, boot record and CMOS setup) with provision of detailed comparison with the current system settings and original backup copy.

(e) Advanced virus independent check facility to check for illegal (non standard) instruction in system areas.

PC UNIX VENDORS : Will They Be COSE Compliant?

Things don't look so good for some PC-Unix vendors. Novell Inc., The Santa Cruz Operation Inc., and Sun Microsystems Inc. pretty much dominate the industry, but now even the niche players—who account for millions of packages—are worried. To forge a place, many smaller vendors have bet on the Common Open Software Environment standards, which will be set by X/Open Co. Ltd. with input from various vendors. But some small fry don't see the standards coming together soon enough to help them sell units. "I'm not convinced it'll gel," groans Harvey Modlin, product manager with Esix Computer Inc. "Now we have to support X/Open. What good does it do us? X/Open is just muddying the waters right now."

Despite the hand-wringing, every Unix operating-system vendor we talked to, except Berkeley Software Design Inc., plans to be COSE compliant. Those include: Mark Williams Co., Consensus Corp., Esix Computer Inc., Sunsoft, Microport Inc., Micro Station Technology Inc., Next Computer Inc., SCO, Tenon Intersystems, U.H. Corp., and Novell.

Carolyn W.C. Wong

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