



newsletter

The management
Newsletter for all
industries involved
with bar-code
scanning and
related
technologies.

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The first European....

....hand-held laser scanner has been launched by Datalogic Optic Electronics, of Italy. The LG100 has a scan rate of 50 scans per second and can read bar codes between 0 and 25cm away (nearly 10 inches). Like other hand-held laser scanners (SCAN Jun 83), the LG100 is a pistol-like device. A unique feature is that only a short part of the "barrel" points forward -- about two-thirds of the device is behind the handle grip.

The device is already in production and was recently on show at a cash and carry wholesale equipment exhibition in London. It could be seen side by side with the Symbol Technologies LS7000 (handled by Numeric Arts), and the Spectra Physics/Intermec 9500. The Datalogic LS100 is handled by Pepperl & Fuchs (GB) Ltd in the UK. Depending on specification, the one off price is £800 to £1,000.

Pepperl & Fuchs (GB) Ltd, 159 Huddersfield Road, Oldham, OL1 3PP, England: UK phone 061-633 6431; Telex 667308. Datalogic Optic Electronics sPa, Via Candini 2, 40012 Lippo Di Caldera a Di Reno, Bologna, Italy; Italian phone 051/726565; Telex 511021 DALOG I.

The introduction of Visa International's....

....electron card (SCAN Jun 83) has considerable implications in the international market place. Visa has announced plans to issue the card which incorporates 3 separate machine readable codes: UPC version D-3 bar code, OCR and magnetic stripe. Our comments on some major points to examine and resolve:

- The fascinating statement from Thomas Honey, Senior VP/Visa/USA that "for a minimum cost, most UPC scanners can be upgraded to read UPC version D-3 by the addition of a microchip". For years, the International Article Numbering Association EAN has been trying to get the much simpler upgrade of equipping the UPC scanners to read EAN-13 and EAN-8. There is still considerable resentment by product manufacturers outside North America that they can move their EAN bar coded products anywhere within the EAN community, but they have to repackage and incorporate the UPC bar code for their North American market.
- The impossible task of trying to obtain detailed information on EAN compatible scanners in North America, whether newly installed or retro-fitted.

We can only hope that Visa have more luck in monitoring the conversion rate to UPC version D-3.

- In the international retail sector -- and Visa is an international card -- the upgrading to UPC version D-3 may not move at the same pace as in North America. It has been pointed out to us more than once "that UPC-D is entirely within the domain of UPCC and has nothing to do with EAN".
- Things are not straightforward for OCR either. The initial Visa statement made no mention of the option between OCR-A and OCR-B. Some of the English language world is committed to OCR-A. Most of the rest of the world, including Japan, favours OCR-B.
- A final point, made to us by more than one European department store executive, was to question why the machine readable code on the card had to match the machine readable code on the products. The "electron" card makes sense to them but not the need to read it with the same device as the code on the product.

The British Phonographic Industry Ltd,....

....the UK trade association representing nearly 100% of the record manufacturers, publishes its guidelines for bar coding in July. UK and other European manufacturers are likely to respond positively and quickly. The Record Industry Association of America (RIAA) developed its standards ahead of demand and American record companies were slow to adopt the UPC bar code on LPs. Take up by US retailers has been painfully slow.

In the UK, potential demand already exists. W H Smith, Boots and Woolworth (all leading members of the Article Numbering Association) sell nearly one in three of all record products. In addition, the record charts are compiled by Gallup (SCAN/IE Nov 82) from data collected on terminals installed in 250 retail outlets. Gallup use Data Recognition's President terminal, designed to be upgraded to EAN/UPC bar code reading which is expected in about two years.

The BPI Guidelines are closely related to the RIAA/UPC system for American records. The Guidelines back both EAN and UPC bar coding. For patriotic reasons, and more logically for closer participation with national EAN authorities, EAN coding is being seriously considered. UPC membership is also supported, thus ensuring less troublesome exports to the USA. Even in those limited sectors where EAN compatible scanners are used, American distributors are reluctant to accept EAN bar coded products. Some major European companies have therefore decided to adopt UPC for some labels and EAN for others. Another split is UPC for audio and EAN for video, because of the incompatibility of European video recordings and North American TV systems.

The growth in source marking is likely to be rapid for newly-released products. All the majors have sat around the table developing the guidelines and there has been considerable contact with other European suppliers. It seems likely that the bar code will appear on LPs, cassettes, some singles, videos and compact discs within the next few months. EAN bar codes have appeared on EMI video products for over a year now.

Details from: British Phonographic Industry Ltd, Roxburghe House, 273/287 Regent Street, London, W1R 8BN, England.

Intermec France reports....

....a considerable growth in turnover for F/Y end 31 Mar 83. Edouard David, President, reports that in only its second year, turnover was 12 FF millions (\$1.75M), up 62% on the initial year and beyond the executives' optimistic expectations. Profits of 725,000 FF (\$100,000) were re-invested in the business, providing capital of 1 FF million (\$150,000). The business is predominantly French, employing 15 people, mainly distributing the broad range of Intermec products manufactured in the USA. Intermec (Lynnwood, WA USA) has a 19% stake in the operation. The majority shareholding is French owned.

There are 28 French "scanning" stores using light pens for data capture. All of these are reported to be Intermec, even though the point of sale terminals come from different manufacturers. Intermec France also does a lot of business in the non-retail sector.

Intermec France, Bureaux de la Jonchere, 64 rue Yvan Tourguenoff rn 13, 78380 Bougival, France; French phone (3) 969 04 52; Telex 697543 F.

Welcome to the Czechoslovak....

....Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the 19th member of the International Article Numbering Association EAN. Czechoslovakia's membership was accepted at the EAN General Assembly at the end of May.

When we first mentioned the EAN General Assembly meeting (SCAN/IE May 83), there were three major topics up for discussions.

1. For the next three years, symbology on outer cases will be restricted to ITF14, EAN-13 and possibly EAN-8. In all essential scanning details, the ITF14 specification will be the same as the UPC Case Code specification. The Swedish proposals for outer case codes (SCAN/IE Apr 83) were accepted as part of the specification. This means that within the EAN community -- and it's likely to vary country by country -- there is a choice in outer case code systems. The choice is between a 13-digit number totally unrelated to the number of the consumer product in the outer, and a 14-digit number where the 12 significant digits of the consumer code and the middle 12 digits of the outer case can be the same. A "logistical" variant, valued 1 to 9, discriminates between case sizes, eg 12s, 24s, 48s. A "gentleman's agreement" exists not to use the French proposal for a logistical variant system requiring a 16 digit number and bar code.
2. The report from the Working Party on General Merchandise was accepted. The main points from the report are:
 - Where food and general merchandise are sold in the same retail outlet it is clearly desirable to use the same system.
 - The EAN/UPC code and symbol has proved to have overwhelming advantages over any other system.
 - The major part of general merchandise can and shall adopt the rules already applied for mass consumption goods within the EAN system. This means a unique identification per product but no attempt to structure the number for style, size, colour, fit variations.

- Further technical investigations will take place to see if there is a real need for, and solution to, the practice in some sectors for long structured numbers. If adopted this would only be an interim stage, allowing range coding in the EAN-13 symbol only in exceptional circumstances. The EAN system is firmly based on the principle of "one article or variant of an article leading to one unique identification code".
3. No decision was reached on a new "world structure" for the International EAN Association. A special meeting, dedicated to this subject, could be held later this year.

New Zealand is the latest....

....country within the EAN domain to boast of retail scanning installations. The New Zealand Product Number Association (NZPNA), is particularly pleased with the professional approach adopted by the pioneering retailers.

McDonald's Supermarket, Taradale, a family-owned business, can lay claim to be first with a six lane system going live in April. They just beat Foodtown, of Papakura, to the post. Foodtown had a demonstration scanner operating from early April, and they introduced full scanning in mid-May.

Brian Smith, Executive Director of NZPNA, tells us that there could be a dozen stores scanning by the year end. At present the level of source marking is low -- a recent report shows less than a thousand products, but many are in the "pipeline". Since the beginning of the year, manufacturer membership has gone from 193 to 261. Among the 72 other members of NZPNA there are 16 trade associations. This suggests a level of interest which bodes well for future industry-based developments.

Photographic Sciences has announced....

....that a distributor agreement for its Quick-Check bar code verifying instrument has been reached with Numeric Arts Ltd for the UK and Republic of Ireland. The Quick-Check employs a hand-held wand scanner.

Numeric Arts already handles Symbol Technologies' laser verification equipment which covers the more sophisticated requirements of larger quality control operations. According to Mark Marriott, Numeric Arts' Managing Director, "We see the Quick-Check as the ideal product to complete our range of instruments. We have long recognised our customers' need for our laser based devices to be supplemented by low cost, portable 'first level' instruments. The Quick-Check meets this requirement exactly."

Numeric Arts will distribute the product directly and through specialist sub-distributors, like Service Codes Ltd (SCAN/IE Jun 83). The UK price of the Quick-Check is £890 and £390 for the printer.

Numeric Arts Ltd, Gardner Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 7PP, England;
UK phone (0628) 39753; Telex 847369.