At its organizational meeting....

....held on August 7-8, 1980, the American National Standards Institute sub-committee on coding and labelling undertook some very significant topics related to this industry. Officially designated as MH10-SBC-8, the sub-committee is chaired by Michael Noll who is also very active as the Army's representative to LOGMARS.

There were a number of background briefings to acquaint members of the sub-committee with the current state-of-the-art. Bruce Smith (Scanmark/Markem), representing AIM, reviewed the Uniform Symbol Descriptions that are being written by his organization. John Membrino (Scott Paper) representing the Distribution Symbology Group, described the group's progress and conclusions. Dr. Richard Thatcher discussed the American Blood Commission's selection of a modified Codabar symbol for blood-banking. Allan Gilligan of Bell Labs reviewed a variety of applications that have been developed by his company using both 3 of 9 and Code 11 symbologies. Roger Palmer of Intermec offered the Code 39 specifications developed by Intermec for free use by the committee.

George Bowen of ANSI, stated that the sub-committee should be concerned with the structure of the code, operating performance and security, print quality and print medium, location of the symbol, direct printing vs. label printing, and parameters on print quality. The committee is to be concerned from the standpoint of the user. Since the committee is operating under the ANSI umbrella it was most significant to note these points and to understand this "charge". It is expected that the sub-committee output will be a document which defines technically how to produce an optically scannable bar code symbol.

Based upon that, the members agreed on the following scope of work:

"To develop a standard for bar code symbols and bar code symbol labelling of unit loads and transport packages for use and distribution in transportation systems. The group will work with existing bar code symbols -- Interleaved 2 of 5 and 3 of 9 codes until such time as differing direction regarding a standard bar code symbol is received from ANSI. Codabar will not be excluded from consideration at this time. However, the UPC symbol, Code 11 and Plessey codes will not be considered. Both pre-printing and post-printing processes need to be discussed in the standard. It is crucial to include data on Film Master production. Spectral responses of the various scanners used to scan the code need to be addressed, possibly in an appendix. Both the

scanning and wanding must be considered. A statement regarding quality control of the code as regards substrates and inks may be made, but specific criteria for quality control would not be developed. The problem of adhesives on labels and their effect on scannability must be addressed. The PCS on labels must be above certain levels and tied to environmental conditions. A section on harsh environments should also be included in the standard."

The committee may also cover the placement of the code on the package, the orientation of the bars to the container and test patterns for scanner equipment. Committee assignments were made and a meeting was tentatively scheduled for November 1980 at Tobyhanna Army Depot.

Anyone interested in direct participation in the sub-committee's work, or at least in keeping informed as to progress, should contact Michael Noll, DARCOMPSCC, Attn: SDSTO-TP-P, Tobyhanna Army Depot, Tobyhanna, PA 18466; 717/894-8301.

We suggest that companies involved in this segment of the industry monitor the progress of this ANSI sub-committee closely since it is expected that the results will affect us all.

The LOGMARS semi-annual update....

....is now available to those interested. Some of the highlights of the many programs which involve bar code scanning:

- The Army has solicitied equipment procurement for retail receiving tests in Germany. These tests are scheduled to start in January 1981. Sorting by bar code labels is to start at the Army's New Cumberland installation in late 1980 to include overhead remote laser scanners. The Army dot matrix printer test has been completed and a report is also due shortly.

- The Air Force is conducting their wholesale receiving test at Robbins AF Base, GA, and is scheduled to start January 1981. Solicitation of equipment has been completed. The Air Force maintenance parts tracking by bar code is also scheduled to start January 1981 with Code 39 to replace 2 of 5.

- The Defense Logisitic Agency will be conducting their shipping test at the Defense Depot, Ogden, UT, in December 1980 with equipment still to be purchased. DLA is also conducting their inventory location survey scheduled for October 1980.

- The Navy Ammunition Inventory/Audit Test is operational and successful.

- Tobyhanna (Army) scheduled their joint test of the printing of bar codes on 10 different substrates for outer cartons in July 1980. Scanners have been purchased for this operation.

- To date 300,000 labels have been furnished to vendors for source-marking tests from procurements made by AF and DLA.

For further information about LOGMARS activity, and the new brochure and questionnaire developed for an industry survey, contact, Donald Deppeller, DARCOM, Attn: SDSTO-TP-P, Tobyhanna, PA 18466; 717/894-8301 X7683/4.

Teknekron is a scanning hardware company....

....somewhat out of the industry mainstream. The company has been trying to keep its technology as secret as possible to protect it from competitors' prying eyes.

The scanning systems produced by Teknekron are distributed by W & H Conveyor Systems (Carlstadt, NJ) under the name of WHizscan. A WHizscan scanning system costs $80,000 and the company reports that it has sold and installed 10 units and contracted for 10 more. There is talk of another model, using similar technology, coming out soon priced at a drastically reduced $15,000.

The system employs a unique method of optical scanning using a camera which, the company claims, has an almost zero percentage error. One of the major advantages indicated is that miniature bar codes, which can be generated by IBM 1403 printers, can be selected and read from large area surfaces. It is claimed by the manufacturer that their "3 of 5 code" requires substantially less area, can be printed in all colors (including red and brown bar codes on kraft), has greater reliability, and much more flexibility as to location and code orientation.

For further information contact Teknekron Controls Corp., 2121 Allston Way, Berkley, CA 94704; 415/843-8227.

We have constantly complained (privately)....

....about the low visibility of scanning in the New York Metropolitan area. It was therefore particularly gratifying when two significant scanning installations came onstream this summer in our town of Great Neck, Long Island.

Waldbaum's Supermarket, a very successful regional chain of over 100 medium-sized stores, opened their first scanning supermarket in July. The chain management had been resisting scanning, and changed their mind only three weeks before the opening of this spanking new store. It almost drove the NCR people up the wall, but the store was equipped and running on schedule. From all indications, scanning has been very well received by the public.

The second, and also highly visible, scanning installation in town is the new CLSI system at the Great Neck Library. For years CLSI has been after Joe Covino, the director of this leading library, to install the automated checkout system. Covino has resisted, choosing to wait until other libraries have tried and debugged the scanners.

Some statistics: Great Neck's library has 250,000 volumes, distributed through a main building and three branches; 675,000 books are borrowed annually averaging a very high 14 books per capita, making it one of the most active public libraries in the nation; the library's budget runs $2.1 million per year and it employs 145, of whom 85 are part-time; there are about 30,000 library patrons out of a total population of 47,000 residents.

The system cost $200,000 to purchase plus $80-90,000 additional setup costs. They estimate the annual maintenance to be $20,000. This will be one of the first systems employing the Metrologic overhead laser scanners (five of them) replacing the hand-held wands that have been used in previous CLSI systems. There has been some dissatisfaction with the wands because of breakage and malfunction, and many libraries want to convert to the more efficient lasers.

As designed, the system will do the following:

- Book checkout, checkin and complete circulation statistics. Each volume has its own bar coded label on the inside cover, and every patron uses a bar coded borrower's card. (By the way, in libraries the bar code labels are called "Zebra strips.")

- Instant identification of delinquent patrons and production of over-due notices and invoices. The library previously collected $50,000 per year on delinquencies and lost books, and knew it was missing many thousands more.

- Control of holds and reserves with purchase alerts generated, based on the number of reserves.

CLSI seems to be succeeding where others have failed. An automated library system is more complex than it seems, and a number of companies, including IBM, 3M and Xerox, have not been able to market viable systems, although they have tried. CLSI is currently reported to be having problems keeping up with the increased demand.

A major advantage of working in this public non-competitive area is the active Users Group, sponsored by CLSI, which meets regularly and openly exchanges information and experience. We have covered library systems before (SCAN Sep 77, Oct 77, Feb 78, and Jun 80) and this first-hand experience has convinced us more than ever that this is an excellent scanning application.

Symbol Technologies completed its public offering....

...for a new infusion of capital amounting to about $2,250,000. The offer comprised 500,000 units (at $5.00) each, consisting of one share of common stock and a warrant to purchase (at $5.50) another share of common within the next five years. The warrants are redeemable by the company at $2.50 each at the end of two and one-half years.

In their prospectus the company showed a nine-month (unaudited) loss of $118,000 on sales of $1.7 million. For the fiscal year ended August 30, 1980, sales are anticipated by management to be between $2.3 and $2.4 million with the bottom line figures not yet available. The figures for the year 1979 were sales of $840,880 and a loss of $539,980. The price of the company's stock, as quoted on NASDAQ (8/28), was $5.50.

The detailed prospectus presented a great deal of insight into the company's operations. As is usual in offerings for smaller speculative companies, the mandated pages on "Risk Factors" provided some of the most interesting reading.

In any case, the Hauppauge, NY company now has the additional funding to proceed with its plans for the development of new equipment and markets, and the staffing of additional sales offices. A new regional manager has been named to the mid-Atlantic area. Bill Leary will be working out of the home office and reporting directly to Dick Rausch, Vice President of Sales. He is replacing Susanne Harrison who is assuming a new corporate role as executive coordinator for planning and special projects.

The ready acceptance of this stock offering to the public, as well as the successful venture capital activities of other companies, indicates a receptive

capital market for this industry at this time. This was not always true and it
suggests that the marketplace is looking more kindly on companies involved in
bar code scanning.

There has been a healthy....

....and continuing interest by the National Wholesale Druggist Association in
bar code scanning and its potential impact on the manufacturers, wholesalers
and retailers of their industry.

The project has been assigned to the Ad Hoc Business Systems Committee on Scan-
ning. A recent committee meeting was attended by representatives from the scan-
ning hardware companies, including David Collins of Computer Identics and Paul
Slingerland of Data Terminal Systems.

After reports on the status of scanning with the retail drug chains (quite
active), and the comparison between wand scanners and slot scanners (those
present thought that wand scanners were more suitable for the drug retailers),
the committee reached the following general conclusions: scanning is expected
to have an impact on the industry in the 1980's; pharmaceutical manufacturers
should be encouraged to print the UPC symbol on their SKU's; further investiga-
tion should be made as to a suitable manner for coding the shipping containers;
and coordination should be encouraged with the food industry which has already
gone through a great deal of this development period.

The committee, under the direction of Richard Cook, NWDA's Director of Opera-
tions and Research, has decided to move ahead aggressively and investigate this
field more actively. Contact: NWDA, 670 White Plains Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583;
914/723-3571.

The annual "grudge" match....

...between Computer Identics and MEKontrol stands even at one each. Last year
C/I beat MEK, (SCAN Aug 79), but this year's softball results were reversed.
Dean Percival of MEK tells us that they won the ballgame 17 to 7 and they feel
somewhat avenged.

Dave Collins of C/I is wondering how MEK could have engineered such a radical
turn-around. He suspects that John Hill had been recruiting some MEK ringers
this past year that just clobbered his team.

Bar code printing on labels....

....can now be accomplished using the microprocessor controllers manufactured
by Quality Micro Systems and used with Printronix printers.

QMS markets its Magnum products through the Printronix distributor group.
These distributors sell the complete label printing system that can be inter-
faced with IBM's System 34 and System 38 computers. According to the manufac-
turer, the device utilizes a unique dual micro-processor design. The QMS con-
troller generates variable size block letters from 0.1" to 10" upon instruction.
Bar codes are generated by programs contained in the controller. Other
features include reverse imaging, mixed sizes on a line, variable aspect ratios,

label repeat, double height characters, horizontal and vertical tabbing, line drawing set, picture capability and many others.

QMS claims that the labelling system allows substantially reduced printing costs and eliminates costly turn-around and overstocking requirements of labels amd bar codes printed by outside vendors. Programming requirements are said to be very simple and require a few control characters.

The price of the system, including printer and full-label printing capabilities, is less than $10,000. Contact QMS, Box 1644, Mobile, AL 36633; 205/243-2767.

Accu-Sort Systems announces....

....its new Model 2000 Logic Section for use with its moving beam scanner Models 55 or 40. The Telford, PA company states that scanning heads are used to read bar code symbols and the Logic Section decodes the scanned pattern and then provides two unique features. It can keep count of the various numbers which have been seen by the scanner for production counting, and can be used for tracking and timing routines to activate conveyor diverters in sortation systems.

Prices range from $3,000-6,000 for hardware and $2,000-7,000 for software.

This industry....

....lost a most active member with the passing in July of Don R. Percival, Founder and Chairman of the Board of MEKontrol.

Don had long been recognized as a prime mover in the scanning industry. He was a past chairman of the Automatic Identification Manufacturers and active with MHI. He will certainly be missed.

There is a scheduled conference....

....of the Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry to be held in Hershey, PA on October 8. Included in this TAPPI conference will be a paper presenting an overview of bar code scanning by George Goldberg of SCAN Newsletter.

"Scanning -- The Future for Manufacturers"....

....is the title of a session on UPC scanning sponsored by the Computer Application Council of NARGUS. The one-day session will be held on September 30, 1980, at the Hyatt-Regency O'Hara Chicago and will include presentations from retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers. Contact: NARGUS, Box 17208, Washington, DC 20041; 703/860-3300.