



newsletter

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

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Final details have been released....

....of the sessions and speakers for EPOS 83 (Sep. 20-23, London). In keeping with earlier EPOS conferences, delegates will be able to pick their way through various sessions, some running in parallel over the first three days. Fees range from £35 + tax for a quarter day, to £480 +tax for all four days.

The parallel sessions have been planned so that the subjects are likely to appeal to different audiences: "Systems Developments for the Larger Retailer" against "Data Capture in Filling Stations". The presentations cover a broad range of subjects of interest to retailers in almost every trade, with a great deal of emphasis on scanning and bar coding. The newest in systems, hardware, applications, cost justification and related subjects will be explored.

One full day is reserved for international speakers. The papers cover: Off-licence (liquor) system, OY ALKO, Finland; The Limited Stores, San Francisco, USA; Hwa Chinese Products Emporium, Hong Kong; scanning in Karstadt food departments, West Germany; EPOS in Australia; physical distribution in HEMA (variety store), Netherlands.

The EPOS 83 Exhibition, which runs the entire four days, is already booked with 43 exhibitors dedicated to equipment and services specific to the retail and distributive trades. Delegates to the conference have ample time for an in-depth visit. As entrance is free, hundreds of others walk in for the exhibition alone. Book through Fiona Anderson, RMDP Ltd, 5/6 East Street, Brighton, BN1 1HP, England.

Hugin Kassaregisters AB, Sweden....

....has retained a major interest in the marketing of Datachecker EPOS scanning equipment. Following the announcement of the merger between National Semiconductor and DTS (SCAN Jul 83) the new operation announced some of its international marketing arrangements.

We reported (SCAN/IE Mar 83), that the merger in the United States would have some interesting international repercussions. Hugin has been distributing NSC's Datachecker system under a marketing agreement of September 81. DTS has had its own European and Australian operations, and Olivetti distributes DTS equipment in parts of Europe.

The marketing agreement with Hugin has been extended to September 1990. The new arrangement is non-exclusive, allowing NSC to licence DTS and other distributors in Europe and other countries. Hugin will remain the chief distributor for Datachecker and will market the scanning system in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Venezuela and West Germany. David Pope, Hugin group president, appears to be pleased with the deal. Hugin will maintain its successful relationship with the Datachecker Division while "receiving adequate benefits from allowing other distributors into the market place".

A most frustrating feature....

....of the EAN/UPC system is its one-way compatibility. UPC-A and UPC-E bar codes can be read on EAN scanners, but EAN-13 and EAN-8 symbols cannot be read on most installed UPC scanners. This fact creates many real, imagined, trade and psychological barriers to the smooth development of international source marking. A recent example is the complex policies adopted by British record and video manufacturers (SCAN/IE Jul 83). The start of the UK and other European source marking of records was delayed by at least six months because of these issues.

Historically, there may be justification for the one-way compatibility since UPC preceded EAN, and early scanners could not be expected to read an undeveloped bar code. But a long time has elapsed. Most new scanners now on the market can read all four standard symbols. The problem has been the reluctance of the US retailers to retrofit existing scanning installations to read the EAN symbol. As a result EAN manufacturer members are faced with resistance to their EAN source-marked products in North America. As a practical matter, food products are not really a problem. European manufacturers have for a long time adopted UPC for such products exported for sale in the American supermarket sector. Often the packaging had to be different because of US food and drug regulations, so the inclusion of a different bar code made little difference.

We think that the real problem is just beginning to emerge with the many general merchandise products which are not produced in large quantities. To cause a manufacturer to re-label or re-package for the North American market could be considered almost an unfair trade practice.

There has been very poor progress in achieving full two-way compatibility of EAN/UPC equipment and an understanding of the issues by Americans. Because of this, the General Assembly of the International EAN Association recently voted a budget to mount a press campaign, to be conducted in 1984, to make American equipment suppliers and retailers aware of the problems.

Comment

The International EAN Association's funds are not very large for this campaign. In view of our increasingly international base of subscribers and the spread of bar coding throughout the world, we would welcome comments on this serious issue. In particular, we would like to hear from equipment manufacturers with details of models, dates when full compatibility was achieved, and other information relevant to full EAN/UPC compatibility.

A number of UK department stores....

...have expressed more than a passing interest in bar coding. Now that the way is clear (since the International EAN Association's General Assembly) to extend the EAN bar code to all types of general merchandise, we expect interest to grow. A few pioneers are about to embark on the trail.

- Selfridges has become a member of the Article Number Association, the UK EAN affiliate, and has already announced its first scanning installation. This will be in the toy department. The system will go live in September in time to catch the peak Christmas sales period.
- We understand that Harvey Nichols has been evaluating the use of bar coding against OCR on garment tickets. Bar coding was preferred and the company is now giving serious thought as to which particular symbology to adopt. It could almost choose any bar code, but the prospect of even some EAN source-marked products has its appeal.
- Other major department store operators are beginning to give serious attention to the level, albeit low at present, of source marking.

These probes into bar coding by UK department stores indicate a potential level of development beyond those already established by the Karstadt department store group of Germany. By the end of 1982, Karstadt had three scanning installations in food departments, with the company committed to more installations this year.

The British Footwear Manufacturer's Federation....

...administers a bar code standard developed by one of its members, Clarks Limited. Besides Clarks and its associated company K Shoes, a number of other leading shoe manufacturers have registered on the scheme: Bally, Levis for Feet, Lotus, Start-Rite and Van-Dal.

The symbology is Interleaved 2 of 5 and the 12-digit code has the following structure:

- 3 digits -- manufacturer
- 4 digits -- style
- 2 digits -- colour/fit
- 3 digits -- size (English or continental size multiplied by 10)

The symbol appears on labels on the end of shoe boxes. In some cases it is conventionally printed. In others, laser printers are used to print the bar code, eye readable information and a realistic representation of the shoe.

The EAN-13 bar code has been given serious consideration, but the shoe industry wished to maintain its use of structured numbers and found the 5 digits available for the item number in the EAN bar code too restrictive.

The British Footwear coding system has been designed for a more international use and the next stage of development is to open up registration to foreign manufacturers. As time goes by, the system could gradually spread to other countries. Because of the strong position of Clarks in the UK market place, the 2,500 independent shoe retailers are almost certain of having all their product source marked. It is expected that the first applications will be for

more frequent full stock checks; point of sale data capture may follow on. Manufacturers have the prospect of automating many parts of their distribution operation.

Codeway may be a new name....

....on the bar code scene in the UK, but the products and key personnel are well established. Codeway Limited is the result of a management buy-out of the Norscan bar code printer business from Norprint.

Ian Russell, Managing Director of Codeway, tells us that the new business will continue to handle the equipment marketed by Norprint, including Welch Allyn products. Codeway has raised a £50,000 loan from British Technology Group to develop low cost equipment for printing runs of bar coded labels.

The first model to be launched is the B-150 keyboard-based, thermal label printer. This is an improved version of the Norscan. The B-150 offers higher print speed and better quality bar codes. Various bar codes, alpha labels and mixed bar code and data labels can be produced on the printer. Depending on the specification, the price for one off is £1,700 to £2,500. Codeway Limited, Valley Road, Harwich, Essex, CO12 4RR, England; UK phone (02555) 3131; Telex 98156.

Esselte Meto has introduced....

....a hand-held, microprocessor-controlled, thermal printer called the Multicoder. Nick Fraser, of Esselte Meto's UK business operation, provided us with the essential details.

The device allows various types of machine-readable and eye-readable codes to be printed; and because of the microprocessor control, it's possible to produce a label combining different elements. Product identities, price and other details are entered through a keyboard. A switch system controls the type of label format, including various bar codes, OCR-A and B, and eye-readable fonts. The device can carry out check digit calculations and, Nick Fraser claims, "even verifies the bar code". UK price for one unit is between £750 and £1,000, depending on the specification.

Esselte Meto GmbH, Ersheimer Strasse, Postfach 1200, D-6932 Hirschhorn/Neckar, West Germany; German phone 06272/63-229; Telex 466809.

A South African....

....agent has been appointed by Numeric Arts (Maidenhead, England) to handle its symbology products: film masters, and Lasercheck and Quick Check verifiers. Identity & Security Systems Pty is the agency, headed by Ian Beswick, well known in the South African packaging industry. A high level of interest is being expressed in the EAN system in South Africa. Bob Pearcey, Executive Director, South African Numbering Association, recently visited Europe, and leading UK speakers have visited his country. Identity & Security Systems Pty, PO Box 82319, Southdale 2135, Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa; South African phone 11 680 5293.