

Robots assist telephone operators

A recorded voice - with a smile is explaining how to complete telephone calls that reach nonworking numbers or else give customers a status report on such numbers.

Starting about the middle of June, customers calling to 15 of Detroit's telephone exchanges have been answered by an automatic intercept machine when they dial telephone numbers which have been changed, taken out of service or else are not assigned to anyone.

Another 15 central offices were recently connected to the intercept machine.

The new system will automatically give a customer, by means of recordings, the number which has been called and tell the customer why it is not in service, according to Lon Kain of Michigan Bell. If the number has been changed and the new number is available, the machine will pass along that information also, unless the called customer has requested that this information not be given.

Additional metropolitan Detroit telephone central offices will be added until the one machine here until 1977 when the next machine is expected to be placed in operation locally.

By 1980, it is expected that there will be five such machines in operation in Michigan. Four will be in the Detroit metropolitan area and one is planned for Lansing to handle all outstate intercept needs.

EACH OF the five machines is designed to handle as many as 610,000 intercept numbers. This system frees operators from handling all but unusual situations. Operator assistance will be needed only in those cases where the new information hasn't yet been stored in the intercept machine.

Customers will hear a familiar voice in the recordings, that of one Barbey of Atlanta, Ga. She is the "time lady" whose voice is now heard on the recorded time-of-day announcements. And, in fact, the new intercept recordings follow much the same pattern as the time recordings.

For the time-of-day announcements, various hours, minutes and seconds are separately recorded as well as appropriate phrases. These are then pulled together from a magnetic drum to give the customer the correct time when he or she calls the time number.

In the new intercept system, the recorded messages include such phrases as "The number you have reached," and "an operator will answer," and "the new number is." Additionally, recordings have been made by Mrs. Barbey of various numbers and words.

All together, there are 96 tracks on a magnetic drum which are pre-recorded with phrases, words and digits that can be connected in a programmed sequence by a computer to form complete sentences. Twenty-seven different variations can be made from the recorded fragments.

FOR INSTANCE, if a customer dialed a number of someone who has moved from Detroit to Newark, N. J., a complete message might be: "The number you have reached, 555-2368, has been

changed. The new number is 949-9970 in area code 201. Please make a note of it. 555-2368 has been changed. The new number is 48-9970 in area code 201. If you need assistance you may stay on the line and an operator will answer."

Another example of a recording which a customer might hear if he dialed a number which had been disconnected would be: "The number you have reached, 555-2368, is not in service. Please check the number and dial again. 555-2368 is not in service in the 313 area. If you need assistance, you may stay on the line and an operator will answer."

In both these examples, when the customer dialed the Detroit number which is no longer in service, the computer would determine which words and digits to pull together to form the sentences to correctly inform the customer.

If, after hearing the recorded response, the customer stays on the line because of a need for additional instructions, the new system will automatically transmit its information to an intercept operator's console. The operator can

then view the available facts and repeat or explain them to the customer.

THE MESSAGE associated with a nonworking telephone number can be changed and updated as the number's status is changed. This is done by teletype-written instructions which are fed into the computer. The computer files will be updated daily.

The new automatic intercept system was designed by Bell Laboratories and has been manufactured and installed by the Western Electric Co.

There are now eight of these automatic intercept centers already operating elsewhere in the country, including New York City and Cleveland.

Recorded announcements used to help expedite customer service and free operators for other duties have been used by the Bell System since the late 1920s. Weather forecast information, time-of-day announcements, simple forms of intercept announcements, descriptions of unusual service conditions and even World Series scores have been recorded.

OBITUARIES

ROBERT DIETRICH, 44, of Farmington Hills died Aug. 3, 1974, in Farmington Hills. He was born in Buffalo.

Surviving are wife Marlene, father Sylvester of Florida, daughters Dawn Dietrich of Northville and Peggy Auville of Farmington Hills and son Todd Auville of Farmington Hills.

Services were Aug. 8 at the Thayer Funeral Home in Farmington with burial in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Southfield.

MRS. JESSIE SMITH, 74, of Franklin died Aug. 5, 1974, in Franklin Manor Convalescent Center in Southfield. She was born in Michigan.

Services were conducted Aug. 8 at the Thayer Funeral Home in Farmington with burial in Grand Lawn Cemetery.

Election costs 80 cents a voter

FARMINGTON—Primary elections cost money. Not only for the candidates, but also for the taxpayers.

In total, the primary election Aug. 6 cost the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills about \$7,289.

Breaking that down by the number of persons who actually voted, it equals about 80 cents a voter. (According to city clerk records, 6,881 people voted in Farmington Hills and 2,424 in Farmington.)

Floyd Cairns, Farmington City Clerk, said his city paid about \$4,000 during the primary. Much of the money, he said, went for the 125 part-time employees who were hired for the day.

Nedra Viane, Farmington City Clerk, estimated that the primary election cost the City of Farmington \$2,268. She said she hired about 44 persons to work part-time on election day.

Also included in the expense, she said, was the cost of setting up the 19 voting machines, at \$12 for each machine.

Librarian injured in auto accident

A Birmingham woman who is a librarian for the Farmington Public Schools was critically injured in an auto accident while vacationing in Oregon.

Bernadine Blosser, of 1010 Henrietta, suffered two broken hips, a broken arm and leg, and five broken ribs when her rented car was hit enroute to Glacier Lake.

Ms. Blosser was taking a side trip to the vacation area. Her ultimate destination was Portland, where she was to attend the international convention of Delta Kappa Gamma. She is the president of the Farmington Chapter of the international key society for teachers.

Friends in the area were given word late last week that the librarian will be hospitalized for about six months.

Ms. Blosser has been the librarian at Kenbrook Elementary School in Farmington for the past 25 years.

Proud winner

Dale Allmayer walked away from the Oakland County Youth Fair this month with a trophy for the dog he showed in the Sub Novice C class. Dale and his dog were in competition with 69 other dogs in the county show. The winner is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Allmayer, 24445 Dohany, Farmington.

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