

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

PROJECT MAC

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To: Project MAC Group Leaders  
From: R. C. Goldstein  
Subject: Terminal Miscellany

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This memo is intended to raise a number of current issues with regard to Project MAC's use of computer terminals.

The first meeting of the Harvard - M.I.T. Terminal Committee took place yesterday morning. It appears that I will be representing MAC on this committee, but I wish to make very sure that my role is, in fact, a representative one and that anyone with interest in and ideas about our various terminal problems will communicate with me.

The primary function of this committee is to produce the specifications for a family of terminals (probably a basic machine with a set of options) that will, as effectively as possible, meet the substantial range of requirements imposed by the Harvard - M.I.T. community of computer users. This is intended to serve two purposes. An attempt will be made to actually induce some manufacturer to produce terminals meeting our specifications. The inducement will take the form of the rather large order quantity that could be achieved by combining the needs of the two communities. We also hope to publish our design widely with the intention of influencing the general spectrum of terminal users and manufacturers. As you are undoubtedly aware, current terminals are largely based on the de facto standards imposed by the Teletype Corp. and IBM and leave much to be desired.

To facilitate this effort, I would be interested in comments on desirable terminal features and options, and on usage requirements, even if you don't see exactly what features are needed to support them. At several points in our design process, I will give you a chance to review our work, but would like initial comments right away.

The committee may also consider short-term solutions to some of our terminal problems that could be implemented while waiting

for the new terminal to appear. One such possibility has recently appeared in the form of an offer from the Datel Corp. to provide model 30's which are Selectric typewriter-based 2741 equivalents at a price that is between \$50 and \$70 per month cheaper than our current price for a 2741 from IBM. The total saving, if all of MAC's 2741's were replaced, would be in the vicinity of \$50,000 per year - a non-trivial amount. These Datel 30's do not offer the ribbon shift capability that we have on 2741's and the price quoted does not include print inhibit although that can be made available at a price which has not been specified, but which has been guaranteed to be below IBM's.

I would be extremely interested in an expression of opinion on the subject of replacing 2741's in your group with Datel 30's. Do you require ribbon shift? How about print inhibit? Are you willing to pay perhaps \$5.00 per month for the latter? I would especially like to hear about any violent objections to the proposed replacement since the economic argument in its favor is extremely compelling. A decision on this offer must be made before the end of October. Only comments received prior to then can be considered. The earlier I hear from you, the more you can expect to influence any decision which may be made.