

Space at last!

Visitors to Ranger's offices at Northampton will know of the cramped conditions that had resulted from the continuing growth of the Oscar population. Indeed, space was at such a premium at one stage that board meetings had to be held in the pub across the road

(or at least, that was the reason given). Many of Ranger's staff live locally or have moved into the location and the idea of a wholesale move was regarded as a difficult option. However, plans for such a move were in hand when a neighboring property unexpectedly became available, allowing an ideal solution - more space without actually moving at all!

The first phase of this project is now complete, allowing additional engineers to join Ranger's growing support team.

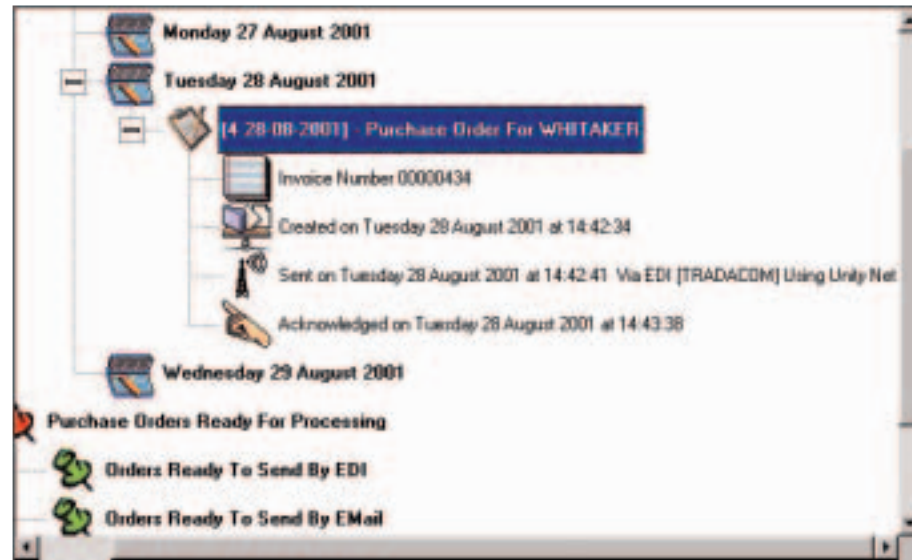
Part of the new facility includes a customer demonstration area and visitors are now welcome. This facility may be of special interest for customers who wish to see a comprehensive Oscar network demonstration involving multiple terminals and accessories.

E-Commerce

Booksellers using Oscar are now able to benefit from EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) technology. Orders can flow directly from Oscar to major suppliers and in many cases acknowledgements return almost immediately.

'recommend' stock re-orders automatically, even placing the items in the correct suppliers 'basket'. Of course, users can delete items, add extra lines or move items between different suppliers as required.

Oscar's EDI system is fully automatic and uses the public internet, rather



In the example pictured above, an order created on 28 August 2001 has been directed to Whitakers Teleordering and sent by EDI. In this case, an acknowledgement was received within a minute of the order being placed. Acknowledgement information is displayed as part of the original order, allowing the user to check the status of each line at a glance.

As you can see in the picture, Oscar keeps a complete history of order activity day by day, allowing previous orders to be checked whenever needed.

Oscar purchase orders are built up from stock re-order requirements or customer special orders. Oscar remembers minimum stock levels and re-order policies for each item, and is able to

than expensive private services, to connect with suppliers. This means that there are no subscription or data charges beyond the local telephone connection to a convenient ISP (Internet Service Provider) in a local telephone call taking typically 60 seconds to complete.

EDI is one of several transmission methods provided by Oscar, which include email, fax and of course hard copy.

STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS.

Book Centre choose Oscar

Waterford based Book Centre have selected Oscar to provide stock control and POS information in their stores at Waterford, Wexford and Kilkenny in the Irish Republic. Book Centre have been using Oscar for music department sales in their stores for some time and have been very impressed by it's performance.

The retailer has previously tested other Epos solutions for book sales, but has found the loose integration between tills and stock control to be a frustrating issue. Unlike Oscar, conventional Epos systems tend to use standard electronic tills to provide a one-way flow of information between the point of sale and the stock control software.

These types of system tend to provide very little confirmation of the correct scanning out of stock, because they are not 'live' with the system's stock database. This means that if technical problems develop, for instance in the system's networking, there may be no obvious warning until actual stock levels are checked physically.

Systems like this are quite adequate in supermarkets, where a degree of error in stock tracking is acceptable, but unsatisfactory in book and record stores where many stock items are held in unit quantity, demanding 100% accuracy. Because Oscar was designed from the outset for this environment, it tightly integrates of each point of sale with the central databases, which are always available in real time.

Operators can even verify the accuracy of stock records during sales transactions by glancing at the screen as the sale is made, since the system always displays the quantity of each item remaining.

Equally important to stock control accuracy is the issue of 'booking in' of incoming stock, which in many conventional systems is achieved by simply accepting suppliers delivery notes. While Oscar can use this technique, is has been designed to achieve high levels of stock accuracy and therefore provides scanning facilities for all incoming stock.



Ranger Computers Limited
Ranger House, 2 Meeting Lane, Duston
Northampton NN5 6JG, England
Tel: +44 (0) 1604 589200 Fax: +44 (0) 1604 589505
e-mail: Postmaster@rangercom.com

News from Ranger



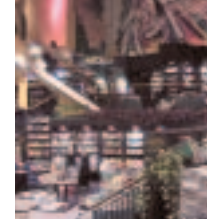
• The Book Centre, Waterford

The first half of 2001 has been a very busy one for Ranger, with numerous new installations in the UK and the Irish Republic and extension to offices at the company's Duston, Northampton headquarters.

Ranger's policy of focusing on it's Oscar point of sale system for independent book and record retailers is certainly paying off, with new sites being added on a weekly basis.

With only a few months to go, detailed plans for Euro-day are in place. You can read in this edition of News from Ranger how Oscar will simplify Euro conversion for retailers in the Euro zone, and provide important new facilities for those still outside.

Although Oscar was originally developed for the Music industry, Booksellers are showing increasing interest in the system and significant orders have been achieved during 2001.



Oscar's unique combination of modern technology and low price allow a vibrant continuing development policy. This is of special interest to Booksellers, who have seen traditional vendors fall by the wayside recently.

Also important is Oscar's ability to support multiple databases, now extended to the international versions of catalogues from Whitaker and Book Data. Oscar is the only system that can access these sources, each containing more than 3m titles, simultaneously.

Oscar now features an EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) system for purchase order transmission. And all users are likely to benefit from new department codes, personal operator log-ins, ISDN communication facilities, new stocktaking facilities, faster receipts and a host of other new developments.

In this issue:

Countdown to the euro
Oscar's new procedures explained.

New communications choices.
New technology brings major benefits for multiple retailers.

3 Million Books!
International databases on-line

Ranger expands
More space at last

Fast Printing
New receipt printer speeds sales

New lease of life for Epson Fleet
Many UK retailers still use chart data terminals

Stop press:
Major book chain in Ireland order Oscar

**If you would like to see a no-obligation demonstration of Oscar at your location, please contact Ranger for an appointment. We look forward to meeting you!*

Euro-Day

January 1st 2002 will be a momentous day for most of Europe when numerous national currencies are subsumed in the Euro. Even in the UK, retailers are beginning to consider the implications and opportunities presented by European visitors who have only one currency to spend.



Currency photos courtesy of The Central Audiovisual Library, European Commission.

Pressure on UK business and government to join the currency is unlikely to slacken as the continent sweeps away centuries of bureaucratic muddle over obscure, and not so obscure, currencies.

So what will actually happen on the 1st January, 2002? The answer is, at least as far as Oscar is concerned, a fairly painless process. Currencies may come and go, but book and music sales go on. Oscar will provide three important functions for the changeover:

- > The facility to accept payment in both the old, 'national', currency and Euro.
- > A changeover to Euro as the 'main' currency on 1st January 2002.
- > A conversion process for essential price and cost information.

Prior to 31st December, 2001, Oscar will assume that payment is in the national currency and switch instantly to Euro if the operator presses the new 'Euro' key. In fact, the Euro key toggles between national and Euro currencies, so it is easy to step back if the customer changes his or her mind.

A new style receipt will state the totals in both national and Euro currencies

and the amount of Euro tendered. However, prior to Euro day, all change will still be calculated and given in national currency. In practice, this means that there is no requirement to have two cash drawers – payments accepted in Euro will simply go into a secure 'lock box' for reconciliation later. To help this process, Oscar's X and Z reports now contain new sections detailing the amounts taken in both currencies.

On Euro day, the process reverses, with Oscar now assuming payment in Euro and only reverting if the special key (In Ireland, now called the '&' key) is pressed. Change is now always in Euro and it is the national currency that goes into the lock box.

While there is a short timetable for removing national currencies from circulation, (about 6 weeks in the Irish Republic) the '&' key may see continuing use as a means of accepting and recording sterling payments and facilities are available for retailers to set and maintain a suitable exchange rate for this purpose.

On Euro day, a special Oscar process will convert internal prices from national currency to Euro equivalents. The prices converted are:

- > Selling price – converted to the exact euro equivalent, without price pointing or rounding up other than to comply with Euro conversion rules.
- > Rolling average cost – Oscar's internal measure of what the current stock has actually cost, on a 'first in first out' principle.
- > Last buy price – the most recent price actually paid for the item.

Each conversion will be documented with a special line in the item's stock history, to avoid possible confusion later.

Even in the UK, retailers may still find Oscar's Euro facilities of interest. If enabled, they will allow staff to give customers instant Euro price information and allow them to accept Euro payment.

New Communication Choices

Electronic communications are at the core of the Oscar system. Music retailers receive catalogue updates every night from a bank of automated systems at Ranger, while other systems collect sales data for the UK and Irish record charts. Book retailers can place purchase orders by email and can now, as you can read elsewhere in this edition of 'News from Ranger', link into supplier's EDI systems.

Multiple retailers use Ranger's 'MultiShop' technology, which can allow every branch to 'see' at a glance sales, stock and other data at all the others. MultiShop is based on yet another dedicated automatic computer network at Ranger which collects, compiles and re-distributes the information overnight.

All of these services have been developed around conventional analogue telephone connections, which are cheap, always available and achieve reasonable reliability. However, new technologies are rapidly developing.

- **ISDN** has been available in the UK for some time and is now available throughout the Irish Republic. Ranger have been appointed a dealer by Irish telecoms carrier Eircom for the installation of ISDN services at retail sites in the Republic, simplifying administrative procedures for all concerned. A new ISDN router supplied by Ranger allows for easy upgrade of existing systems, opening up important new possibilities for branch integration as well as faster and more reliable communications.

- **Cable Modem** may well be the future for retail communications and is available at a growing number of UK locations. It offers 'always on' internet communications as well as vastly improved performance. Ranger can now offer Linux-based servers for Oscar networks, allowing firewall protected connection to Ranger, other branches and the world as a whole.

New receipt printer speeds sales



Oscar has justly gained a reputation for fast customer service and now a new receipt printer works almost twice as fast as the existing model. Every second counts in retailing and the new printer, which is available as an option for both new and existing Oscar systems, takes less than 1 second to print an average receipt. In addition to amazing speed, the new printer can add graphics to receipts as well as text. For the first time, Oscar users can print their own logo on every receipt with no penalty in speed or print quality. Like the standard Oscar printer, the new printer uses thermal paper, eliminating the need for separate and complicated ribbons.



The 'scanning in' of user's own logos is part of Ranger's service for the new printer, working from master artwork or even letter heading to produce a master graphic image. Once scanned, the logo is held in the user's Oscar system for use on any Oscar till. The logo can be upgraded by Ranger as required, and can include text as well as graphical images.

New lease of life for Epson Fleet

The UK record charts are often said to be the best in the world and in recent years this reputation has been re-enforced by the increasing proportion of retailers who report sales data to the UK charts. Millward Brown UK Ltd. who compile the charts for CIN (Chart Information Network) now receive data from more than 4000 retail outlets, a significant proportion of the entire UK market.



Most of this data originates with multiple retail chains, whose individual IT departments forward data automatically through their existing computer networks. In the independent sector, stores equipped with Ranger's Oscar also provide chart data to Millward Brown through automatic systems supplied by Ranger, which contact every store each night.

However, not all independents have yet installed Epos. Chart data from these stores is regarded as extremely important because it represents the 'leading edge' of sales trends and the record industry maintains a continuing commitment to collect chart data from them.

In the UK, Ranger have held the contract to maintain and support the electronic data terminals used in these stores since 1993 and this agreement has just been renewed for a further rolling period, underlining the industry's commitment to independent chart data.

The collection process utilizes electronic terminals known colloquially as 'Epos' after their original manufacturer, Epson Corp.

in Japan. Some of the Epson terminals are more than 15 years old, but by investing in spares and tooling, Ranger are able to keep them functioning well into the 21st Century. While the exact number still in use is confidential, we can say that several hundred independent retailers still scan their sales through Epson terminals and are likely to do so for some time to come.

3 million books

Many independent booksellers stock books originally published in the United States. Oscar now offers a choice of international databases from leading bibliographers Book Data and Whitaker.

Each database lists around 3 million books, instantly accessible on Oscar screens throughout the store. Whether scanning into stock or researching a customer special order, Oscar's close integration with these vast bibliographic data mean that few currently available English language books are unknown to the system, wherever they have come from!