

## Broadband at Last

**SLOWLY**, broadband access to the Internet is becoming a reality. The new technology is available in most UK shopping areas and is beginning to appear in the Irish Republic.

The business advantages of broadband are clear in a customer service oriented industry like retailing.

A broadband connection allows staff to browse for customers' special requirements on publisher's web sites with sufficient speed that this service can form part of a normal over the counter transaction. Because broadband is 'always on', there is no delay in accessing the Internet and important reference sites can be left on display permanently.

However, the Internet really is the Wild West of the 21st century and substantial precautions are needed if a broadband connection is not to

become a highway for criminals as well.

Because it is always on, a broadband connection provides not only a way for you to see the Internet, but a way for hostile forces on the Internet to see you! (A dial-up connection has the same problem, but is much less likely to be attacked).

To help provide protection against external attack, Oscar connects to the Internet over a specialised hardware "Router". This device blocks most forms of unauthorised access, while still allowing Ranger to connect with the system for technical support, catalogue update and chart reporting.



• The new broadband router offers security in the 'Wild West' of the Internet

Even with a router, there is still a risk of bringing malicious materials onto your system accidentally. To protect against this, every Oscar system with Internet access must have anti-virus software installed.

The latest anti-virus software available from Ranger is very unobtrusive, a crucial concern when used on a sales till, and updates automatically against the latest virus threats over the broadband connection.



# news

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## Trends in Retailing

**MANY** independent book and record retailers continue to report good results despite the global trend toward concentration of retailing in 'Superstores'.



• Redlight Records, on Ireland's beautiful west coast, use Oscar in their stores in Shop Street and Eglinton Street (pictured), Galway City, Ireland

The essence of the independent retail proposition is quality of service and a vital component of this is Information Technology. IT has allowed the growth of the superstore industry and when properly employed by independents can help level the retail playing field. An example of how technology can help is provided by Ranger Computer's 'Oscar' Epos system,

which provides independent retailers with facilities that many 'Superstore' operators can only dream about. These include vast industry databases, unit level stock control, instant and flexible management reporting and much, much more. If you would like to know more about how Oscar could help your retail business, please read on...

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- classical music retailers Presto use Oscar to advantage.



• This screen shot shows a page from Oscar 600's personal web site. All of this content was generated dynamically by the system without manual intervention.

Many of the products on the Oscar600 site have been added during live demonstrations and if you'd like a closer look at the system, please give us a call and we'll arrange a convenient time and place.

## Welcome to 2004!

RANGER'S support team were on standby right through the Christmas period,

but this season will be remembered as one of the quietest ever for customer support calls.

The steady evolution of Oscar's software that is largely responsible for the improvements in system reliability that have continued since Oscar was first introduced in 1995.

The Oscar network has now grown to almost 200 retailers and with significant orders already in place for 2004 this trend is set to continue. Ranger's R&D programme for Oscar extends way in to the future and contains many exciting developments.

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## No need to shut this stable door!

THE Stables Theatre in Milton Keynes, set up by showbiz couple John Dankworth and Cleo Laine, has become a respected venue for live performances including big name stars like, recently, Joan Armatrading.



• The impressive frontage of the Stables Theatre, Milton Keynes, England

The site has been carefully redeveloped with a new 400 seater auditorium and, in the foyer, a dedicated record shop - Spinadisc at the Stables.

Because the Stables Theatre offers live performances, there are many opportunities to tie in music sales with Personal Appearances and signings.

Store manager Vick Chamberlain says "Oscar has helped enormously with the task of managing stock and sales over our unusual trading patterns. Most sales occur before performances and during intervals, leading to big peaks and troughs in activity. Oscar copes admirably with this pattern, ensuring that we always have accurate records".



• 'Spinadisc at the Stables', located in the theatre's foyer

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## Hey, Presto

OSCAR'S OCC (Official UK Chart Company) music catalogue has been steadily growing in the range and quality of its classical music coverage and now includes barcoded entries for around 70,000 classical items.

The latest classical shop to install Oscar is Leamington Spa's leading classical record shop, Presto Classical.

Presto's manager, Chris O'Reilly, says "The great joy of Oscar is being able to look up special order items for customers and have them go straight through to purchase orders".

Presto's product range includes sheet music, musical instruments and music books as well as recordings.

As part of a continuing effort to load all of Presto's music related stock onto Oscar, Ranger have installed electronic catalogues from Boosey & Hawkes, Music Sales and OUP.



• Presto Classical in Historic Leamington Spa, England

This gives them good coverage of printed music titles, although as O'Reilly says "There is still some way to go before the classical music industry has a single, integrated catalogue".

We at Ranger look forward to that day, and recognise that the work of sophisticated retailers like Presto is helping to make this dream a reality.

## The Wise Owl

WISE Owl is a leading independent bookseller in the Dublin area with seven outlets, the latest of which is in the ferry port of Dun Laoghaire.



• The Wise Owl in Patrick Street, Dun Laoghaire, Ireland

Oscar systems at each branch link to Wise Owl's head Office at Swords, near Dublin airport, using Rangers 'Head Office' technology. This allows management to monitor sales, stocks and daily performance from a central location.

Oscar, installed in 2002, was a replacement for an earlier and unsatisfactory EPOS installation. Key

to the new system's success is the ability to handle diverse products, including books, stationery and educational supplies. Interestingly, the school book season in August is actually more critical for many Irish booksellers than Christmas!



• Inside the Wise Owl, Dun Laoghaire, Ireland

Many of the product lines are not found in standard Bibliographies, like the BookData used by Wise Owl. The system's ability to distribute new product information directly from Head Office is crucial with these items. Details are typed in to the head office Oscar system and then distributed automatically to the branches.

This means that branch stock is always 'recognised' by Oscar and ensures that stock is always correctly identified on head office systems.

## Newspapers and magazines

THE huge variety and rate of change in periodicals has traditionally made it very difficult for Epos systems to keep track of individual titles.

Now, thanks to a collaborative agreement with Irish wholesaler Easons, all that has changed.

Easons supply newsagents and booksellers with a proprietary re-ordering system called 'First Edition'.

This is actually developed in the UK by Open Projects Ltd., and as the result of a 3-way collaboration between Easons, Open Projects and Ranger it is now possible to share information between Oscar and First Edition.

This means that Oscar is able to recognise books and magazines by barcode and automatically price each item. The saving in administrative time setting up product descriptions manually needs no explanation, but perhaps the greatest benefit is in the detailed sales reports that Oscar can now provide.

First to benefit from this development are Waterford based Book Centre, who now use Oscar to process all of their sales departments, including music, books, periodicals, greetings cards and shortly also educational products.

## Stop Press

IN the far South-West of England, Cornwall County Council have ordered Oscar for use in their Education Library Service. This is the first time that Oscar has been deployed by a local authority and marks an important step both for Ranger and for the Council, who hope to streamline the distribution of school books and simplify internal accounting procedures.

## New hardware!

TECHNOLOGY continues to evolve and Ranger have selected modern replacements for two key Oscar peripherals: the display screen and the report printer.

All new Oscar systems are now supplied with 'Flat Screen' LCD monitors. The new screens are clearer to read, easier on the eye and, crucially, take up less space than traditional tube-based monitors.

Many users will be familiar with the ink jet printers used in Oscar systems and while these have the benefit of being able to print sheet fed labels, they are often not robust enough for modern report printing requirements.

A new report printer, using laser technology, is now available for existing systems and is supplied as standard with new installations.

The new printer uses a network connection, allowing the printer to be installed independently of Oscar or Boscar locations. The printer can be connected to most existing systems without modification.

Existing systems can be easily upgraded. Please contact Ranger for details.

• RIGHT: 'Front loading' laser printer replaces ink jets in Oscar systems



• Oscar LCD screen in use at Presto Classical, Leamington Spa, England



## Gardners Books

GARDNERS Books are the UK's leading book wholesaler offering the largest range of titles in stock and easy ordering facilities for any British or American book in print.



Gardner's electronic catalogue, containing more than 300,000 titles, is now available to Oscar users. The catalogue is fully integrated into Oscar's internal databases and provides instant access to virtually all UK books in print at the scan of a barcode.

The system can also be used to search for authors, ISBN's, or titles and orders can be placed electronically using Oscar's EDI communication facilities. EDI provides electronic order acknowledgements, keeping the retailer in the picture regarding availability and other matters.

Best of all, the Gardners' data is available to all Oscar retailers in the UK and Ireland. Costs are modest, allowing retailers not normally selling books - record shops, especially - to extend their customer service.

Gardners' offer comprehensive stockholding, high fulfilment rate, next day delivery and a full range of customer services. Account terms are normally available with a minimum of formalities.

Incidentally, an Oscar system equipped with both the UK music catalogue from OCC and book catalogue from Gardners represents by far the most powerful EPOS resource available to media retailers anywhere in the UK, or indeed the world!

Oscar is also compatible with many other sources of product information.

## Revealing All

REVEAL Records based in Derby, England, are a long term Oscar user and have recently made a major expansion with relocation to new premises.



Part of Reveal's strategy is to develop a strong Internet presence linked directly to their 'over the counter' business.

WebOscar provided the ideal solution to this and more than 10,000 record products are listed on Reveal's site at

<http://www.reveal-records.com>

• ABOVE: A 'Fish eye' view of Revealing All, Derby, England

WebOscar's 'rules driven' design completely automates the process of populating and maintaining the site, leaving staff free to concentrate on fulfilling orders and of course serving traditional 'walk in' customers!



• A sample page from Revealing All site