



EASY ACCESS



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In the early 1980s British Telecom — operators of Prestel, the largest public viewdata system in the country — combined with the computer manufacturer and publisher Prism Technology to use the system as a medium for distributing software to home computer users and as an exchange point for 'electronic mail'.

Micronet 800 — so-called because its original site was page 800 of the Prestel database — allows owners of a variety of home computers direct access to a considerable range of software that can be run and, perhaps more important, stored on

tape or disk for later use, often free of charge. Subscribers, however, need ancillary hardware and software.

Because one is accessing a remote database via the public switched telephone network, the first requirement is for a modem (modulator/demodulator), a hardware device that translates the computer's signals into signals capable of telephonic transmission. There are two options — hard-wired modems and acoustic couplers. The essential difference between them is that a hard-wired modem is connected into the telephone system by means of a plug, whereas the acoustic coupler operates with a telephone handset (British Telecom standard issue), turning the signals into

Tuning To Micronet

A BBC Micro can be connected to Micronet using any Prestel compatible system. The easiest way to do this is to buy a complete package of hardware (a modem or acoustic coupler), software (a ROM, cassette or disk) and Micronet/Prestel subscription from Prism Microproducts. On this BBC, the Micronet ROM is positioned so that the computer is ready for Micronet the moment you switch on.