

Remember Inslaw? We knew something was fishy at the Reagan/Bush DOJ when it came to Inslaw Corp's software (see "The Inslaw Octopus," *Wired* 1.1), and we also thought the apparent - and quite convenient - suicide of a journalist investigating that story was a bit fishy. It appears the Clinton administration agrees. At the request of the DOJ, the FBI is conducting a quiet investigation of Danny Casolari's death, according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*. What Do Spooks Do When They Retire? They play games, same as ever. Gamemaker Activision has teamed up with former CIA chief William Colby to produce a line of "interactive espionage thrillers." The deal was cut after Colby reviewed the story line for an early Activision title and suggested delaying the murder of a key character. "He might be of some value to ▶

News Box

For the past two years, Associated Newspapers Ltd., one of England's largest newspaper publishers, has been developing an electronic newspaper service and a portable digital news book as an alternative to the morning paper. The project was revealed by Allan Marshall, managing director of UK Mail International, the Associated division created to develop and market the new digital product.

Called "news box," the 4-pound, portable computer will be no larger than a hardback dictionary. It will resemble a book, opening in the middle with a large LCD screen on the left and a small keypad on the right. The book's "spine" will be a radio antenna for reception of data. A 90-Mbyte drive will provide storage.

Designed specifically for commuters, the book will rest in a table-top docking station each night, recharging its batteries and receiving the morning's news via radio (through a special radio/TV broadcast) or through a dedicated telephone connection. Software running on the news box will let the reader mark articles he or she wishes to keep; at work, the box

will download the selected articles to a desktop PC or Macintosh.

Lots of media companies are fiddling around with digital books and electronic newspaper services, but Associated Newspapers is further along than most, because it has already tackled the hardest part of the problem: content. Over the past year, the chain has developed a digital newspaper production system: Advertisements, news, and photographs can now be sent to the chain's largest newspapers by modem and are electronically stripped into place. The huge PostScript files get transmitted from the paper's offices to its printer over a set of high-speed digital transmission lines.

Prototypes of the box are being built under a cloak of secrecy by Neotech, an engineering firm located in southern England, and should be appearing in corporate headquarters by the time you read this. Marshall hopes to have the units on sale in the US by December 1994, with a street price of around US\$500; similar units in the UK will sell for £500.

- Simson L. Garfinkel

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