INTERNET TECHNOLOGY

Vanessa Lewis

Column Coordinator

Thomson Legal & Regulatory

Ph: (02) 8587 2355

Fax: (02) 8587 7100

Email: Vanessa.Lewis@thomson.com.au

Trying to stay mobile?

Trying to spend more time away from the office?

Technological advances are gradually making the Internet accessible, wireless and ubiquitous. Recent innovations such as the networked multimedia home, pocket digital libraries and wireless business uses are changing the digital information world. Soon there will be medical applications monitoring and transmitting information on body temperatures and blood pressure readings over the Internet.

Here are some gadgets to help you stay mobile and connected to the information super highway:

Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs)

PDAs are more than just digital organisers. Some of the latest PDAs can now run applications once thought the domain of the desktop PC. These days, one of the hardest decisions is which operating system (OS) is going to best suit you.

The two main players, Palm OS and Pocket PC, have converged in many respects. Although Pocket PC took a lead in multimedia features, Palms now sport colour screens, voice recording features, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint file editing, and MP3 file playback: <http://www.zdnet.com.au/newstech/os/story/0, 2000024997,20271275,00.htm>

With the right software and peripherals you can extend your PDA's capabilities. If Bluetooth is built into your PDA, with a Bluetooth-enabled phone, you will be able to send and receive email and surf the web wirelessly.

Cellular Phones

People want to make the Internet as easy to use as the telephone, so it is not surprising that a number of cell phone makers have taken the logical step of incorporating microbrowser technology inside their phones

Leading makers, such as:

Motorola <http://www.motorola.com>,

Nokia <http://www.nokia.com>,

NeoPoint <http://www.neopoint.com> and others are adding Internet support to their telephones, enabling web site browsing and email capabilities over wireless networks

This trend is a logical extension of the move away from analog cellular phones to digital and Personal Communication Service (PCS) digital services. Because first-generation cell phones were analog, a direct connection to the Internet was impossible. Special cellular modems had to be attached to separate notebook PCs allowing for wireless communications, an inconvenient and bulky solution. The integrated cell phone/Internet devices of today are no bigger than many typical phones but are far 'smarter': <http://www.smartcomputing.com/>.

Laptop Computers

The popularity of handheld devices and other portable information gadgets has changed the way we carry and store information. The design of the new IBM notebook computer will be the first in a series of such devices that address some of the more basic ways people record information on the go, such as the task of taking notes on paper: <http://news.com.com/>. IBM's ThinkPad mini-notebook comes with a scribble pad that can translate and record notes written on paper to the PC.

Users will be able to enter data via a keyboard, touch screen, or pen on a pad of paper. Transceivers underneath the paper pad track the movement of the pen, transmitting the information via handwriting recognition technology to a text file. The whole notebook comes wrapped in a portfolio-like cover that when folded, can allow an owner to use either the ThinkPad or the paper pad individually.

IBM will also offer TransNote models for both right-handers and left-handers.

And what about those who find themselves working from home?

Chill out with LG's Internet fridge

As a fridge, the GR-D267DTU Internet Refrigerator is a stunner – 506 litres of refrigeration and 310 litres of freezer. It is one of those kitchen appliances that dominates the corner of the room: a massive brushed steel tower that broods, Tardis-like, and dares you to raid it.

Its most notable attribute is the pullout 15.1 inch LCD touch-screen with a stylus tucked away at the side. You may not immediately notice the 10Mbps Ethernet connection around the back, but hook that up to a home network or suitable broadband connection and you're on the Internet. In the kitchen. Via a fridge. Welcome to the 21st century.

With the fridge as it stands, you can leave messages for other members of the family (you can video yourself telling an errant child his or her dinner is in the fridge), keep a diary, videoconference with your favourite chef, browse the web, listen to MP3s and do whatever else you might do with a notebook PC. There is a built-in cookbook and a database containing useful nutritional information. You can also enter 'use by' dates via the on-screen keyboard or handwriting recognition system. When something in one of the fridge's cavernous recesses overstays its welcome, a Check Stored Food alert appears on the main screen with a linked screen showing where the offending item is lurking. The fridge will also self-diagnose minor faults, displaying them on-screen and reporting them to the relevant service centre.

At a cost of around US$11,110, you will impress your friends, amaze your enemies and confound computer reviewers. And you'll be able to tell everyone in Internet chat rooms that you're connected from the kitchen. Via a fridge. <http://asia.cnet.com/reviews/>.