MICRO' NET

As Micro' Net is approaching it's first anniversary in print, it seems appropriate to look back at the developments over the past year in the field of amateur radio and data communications over the past year. Perhaps the two most significant developments have been the growing range of specialist computer packages catering for the radio user and the tre-

welcome whether they are old, young or somewhere in-between!

Amateur Radio Software Index

A few brief notes concerning the Software Index are needed to clarify one or two points. All the prices shown include both VAT and Postage & Pack-

best be described as 'support' programs require no interfacing as they are designed to work on a 'stand alone' basis. Examples of these are morse tutors, log books, QRA locators and the 'Global View' Grey Line DX program featured in last month's HRT. Most of the other packages require electrical connection to a transceiver in order to decode off-air signals and the interfacing requirements depend largely upon a) the facilities provided by the host micro and b) the sophistication of the interface used. In the latter case, interfaces can range from simple single transistor connections between rig and micro to advanced filter and PLL type tuning units. Obviously, it would be unreasonable for anyone to expect to get similar performance from a BC108 than from one or two hundred pounds worth of LSI technology!

Celebrating Micro' Net's first birthday, Dave Bobbett, G4IRQ, provides the most comprehensive and up to date index of amateur radio software.

mendous upsurge of interest in this particular area of the hobby.

One problem which faces newcomers to the field these days is not so much lack of software but how to go about ploughing through all the ads in order to locate the package they are interested in. So in the wake of a number of enquiries for such information, we thought that Micro' Net should celebrate its first birthday by publishing a complete and up to date index of all the radio-related software which is currently on offer.

Before embarking upon that mammoth task however, I would like to thank all those readers who have sent in QSL cards for inclusion in the Micro' Net Data Users List. If you've not got around to dropping us a line yet, you'll find the details on p.23 August HRT. All we would like is a card showing the bands, modes and types of data comms which interest you. Eventually we hope to publish a list of participating stations so that people can get in contact with each other.

Still on the August edition, a *tryping horrer* crept in somewhere along the line which resulted in the Fareham based AMRAC data comms group being described as a group of 'youngsters'. This should have read 'amateurs', the club's membership covers a broad age range and of course new members are always

ing, because it makes cost comparison much more convenient. There's nothing more irritating than having to multiply everything by 1.15 before you know the *real* cost of an item. Whilst the Index is fairly exhaustive, packages which have been advertised without a price have been omitted, as have packages which are said to be 'available soon'. I subscribe to the maxim that "if it isn't on the shelf then it doesn't exist"! No doubt there will be one or two programs which have evaded the eagle eye and I would be glad to incorporate such products in future issues of the Software Index if readers or sellers drop me a line with the relevant details.

Interfacing

A fairly large number of what can

CALLSIGN	COUNTY	BANDS	SYSTEM
		HF	AMTEXT
		VHF	AMTOR
		UHF	AX.25 PACKET
			B CODE
			CAMBRIDGE
			RTTY
			Others......

Please send to:- MICRO'NET, PO BOX 48, COLCHESTER, ESSEX

Fig. 1 Format for the Micro' Net data information card.

Some packages are sold with a simple interface included in the price whereas others offer the option of an interface (of varying complexity) for more money. Other programs are marketed on their own leaving the purchaser to supply a suitable interface of their own choosing. Overall people who are new to data comms would probably opt for a cheap route so as to 'test the water'. whereas more established operators would probably have a suitable tuning unit already and would only need the software. With regard to the capabilities of the micro itself, the only thing to watch here is that your machine has sufficient RAM for the application in question. When a program requires that a minimum amount of RAM is present this has been indicated in the Index.

A final point is that the computer industry (be it on a giant industrial or cottage scale) tends to be rather volatile, so it is wise to check on availability and cost before placing an order. Again, if readers find that a software source has either ceased trading or has expanded their range I would be appreciate hearing about it so that the Software Index can be updated.