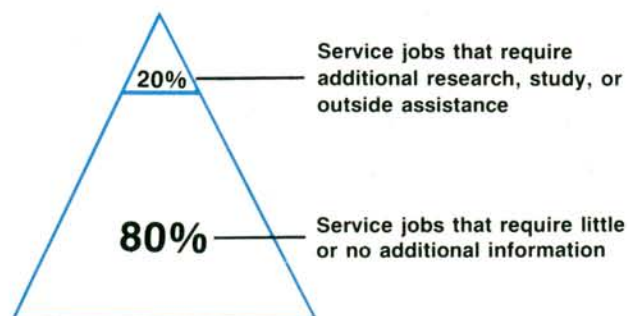




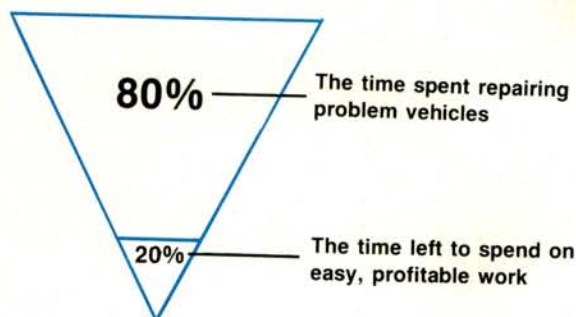
Repair Data

I spoke with Del Wright, Manager of ASA's Mechanical Division, the other day. We were discussing the key problem facing most technicians today—finding the latest technical information that can help increase profits and cut down on diagnostic time.

Wright illustrated the problem for me. "Draw a triangle. This triangle will represent the types of repairs that come into a shop. Now draw a line that divides the triangle 20/80. The top portion, or 20 percent, represents the problem cars that require further research, study, or outside assistance before they can be repaired. The bottom portion, or 80 percent, are



the easy jobs that require little or no additional information.



"Next invert our triangle. It now represents the amount of time needed to repair vehicles. Unfortunately, the figure 80 percent now represents the amount of time spent on problem vehicles. Only 20 percent of a technician's time is dedicated to the easy profitable work. That's why technicians today don't have time to work on, or sell the easy jobs that make them the most money.

"How can technicians improve their billing and cut down on their diagnostic time? They can't be heroes. If they find themselves spending endless hours on problem vehicles, they've got to get on the phone and call a hotline or another information source for help."

Each month in *Import Service*, we run an **Information Station** department that includes information on hotlines, literature, manuals, training, and videotapes available to you. This month we'll use this business feature to take a look at some unique information sources that can help you with those hard-to-fix jobs.

ATC

One source for technical service bulletins is ATC, Automotive Technical Communications. According to Warren Senger, owner of ATC, "We act as an agent of the customer in securing factory service bulletins issued by manufacturers in the U.S." How does ATC obtain the bulletins? Automobile manufacturers are required to give their bulletins to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in Washington, D.C. Once these bulletins are given to NHTSA, they're public information.

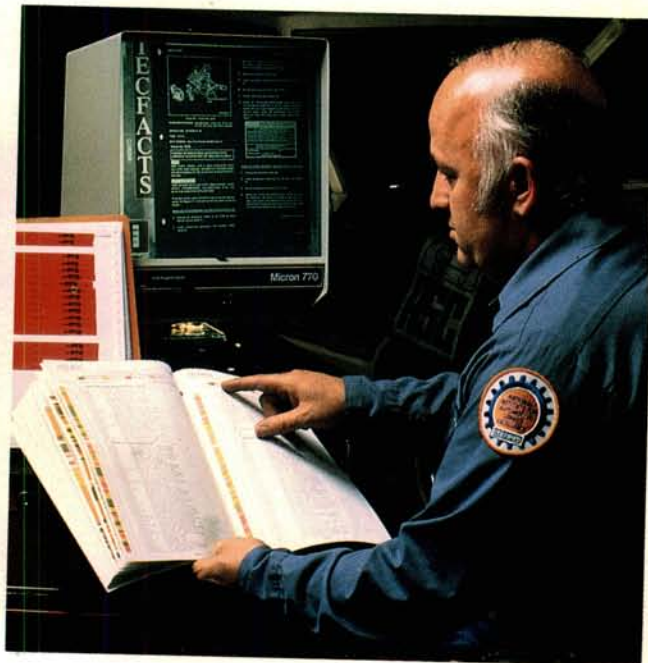
ATC goes to Washington twice a month and picks up copies of the service bulletins. They're then sorted into four categories: import passenger car and light truck; domestic passenger car and light truck; medium and heavy duty vehicles; and transmission and clutch. You can choose the category of bulletins you would like to receive. Bulletins are mailed on a monthly basis, and the subscription price ranges from \$280-380 per year.

In addition to the service bulletins, ATC also puts

out a monthly publication that lists and details automotive defects and recalls. The subscription price is \$268 per year. For more information on either the bulletins or the publication, call 203-378-4761. Or circle number 200 on the reader service card.

TECFACTS

TECFACTS is another source for technical service bulletins. It's a vehicle information service available through Broad Run Enterprises. Broad Run collects manufacturers' service bulletins on import and domestic vehicles, categorizes and indexes them, and then distributes the information on a monthly basis to TECFACTS subscribers. Technical service bulletins from 1978 to the present are available. The bulletins are stored on microfilm so that the maximum amount of information can be easily organized and stored.



The information available through TECFACTS is packaged several different ways so you can purchase only the material that you need. For example, let's say you want all of the bulletins issued in one given year from 1982-present. An entire package like this, including microfilm, binder, and index of bulletins is \$179.50.

The same package is also available for any given year from 1978-1981. These packages are available for \$74.75 each.

If you would just like bulletins for a certain year on one vehicle make, those are available for \$50. Or you can purchase bulletins by system. You can receive information on up to six systems per month for \$300. For each additional system, add \$50. For \$450 per month, you can receive bulletins on all of the systems. Each of these packages includes monthly updates for one year.

Don't see any packages mentioned here that suit you? Broad Run can custom tailor an information package to fit your needs. Their phone number is 215-273-2044. Or if it's more convenient, **circle number 201** on the reader service card and Broad Run will send you more information about TECFACTS.

Dyment

Do you concentrate solely on Audi, Nissan, or Volkswagen repair? Then you may want to contact Dyment Distribution Services. Dyment is an information clearinghouse. They offer service manuals, wiring diagrams, and service bulletins. Some of Dyment's information is available on microfiche.

Of special interest to VW repair technicians is Dyment's Volkswagen Technician's Microfilm Package. For \$159.95 you can receive a microfilm reader, plastic storage organizer, and a one year microfilm subscription. The microfilm subscription includes repair manuals, periodic updates of manuals, service bulletins, and repair diagrams.

If you'd like to find out more about the manuals, diagrams, and bulletins available through Dyment, call 216-572-0725. Tell them which vehicle make you're interested in and they'll send you information listings, prices, and order forms. Don't want to make that call? **Circle number 202** on the reader service card for Audi, **203** for Nissan, and **204** for Volkswagen information.

Call For Help

If you don't feel like shuffling through bulletins or scanning microfilm, there's another option open to you. Technical hotlines provide you with a place to call for help. Many manufacturers have toll-free numbers that you can call for parts information. Often the numbers are listed in ads, or can be found in **Information Station**. In addition, there are three companies that have set up computerized databases of import and domestic vehicle information including service bulletins and troubleshooting tips.

Aspire®

The first company we'll look at is Aspire®. Aspire®'s hotline comes as part of a system called PCT™, Personalized Convenience Training. The PCT™ system was originally developed by Aspire® for United Technologies Control Systems. Just recently, Aspire® bought it back. In the PCT™ package, you get video-based training, current technical reference materials, seminars, and access to the hotline.

According to Eugene D'Andrea, President of Aspire®, "The hotline is offered as a support for our video-based and leader-led training. Hotlines are expensive to run—we have invested almost \$750,000 in ours and have created our own complete database." If you sign up to receive the videos, or to have an



instructor come and conduct a seminar, you will receive unlimited access to the hotline. There is no monthly fee, but you do pay \$1.00 per minute for phone time. If you have a fax machine, the technicians staffing the hotline can fax information to you.

For more information about the PCT™ training program, call 215-295-0722. Or if you'd prefer, **circle number 205** on the reader service card.

Auto-Line

Auto-Line Telediagnosis is a diagnostic hotline staffed by trained and certified import and domestic repair specialists. According to Stu Kidder, Specialist Manager, Auto-Line has a computerized database of over 500,000 pages of vehicle information. From this information, the hotline staff can provide you with:

- factory service bulletins;
- factory service manuals, wiring diagrams, and component locations;
- normal operating ranges of sensors;
- test procedure information;
- tune-up specifications;
- fixes developed by a network of technicians and Auto-Line instructors.

They can also help you operate and understand your scan tool and other computerized diagnostic equipment. If you have an OTC Communicator 2000, Auto-Line's technicians can analyze and diagnose your vehicle from information sent over the telephone.

To provide you with fast service, Auto-Line requests that you get a good description of the problem or information that you need. They also ask for the VIN number so that the database can identify the system you're working on, and retrieve information by that number. In addition, each time you call Auto-Line, the computer generates a case history so that your fixes are stored for later referral.

What do you get with a subscription to Auto-Line? You receive unlimited toll-free calls twelve hours a day, a Southwestern Bell cordless telephone, a users

manual and preliminary information pad, promotional materials, a newsletter, usage reports, and an advertising kit. Your initial cost for all of this is a \$150 start-up fee plus \$88 for the first month. Every month thereafter you pay \$88. If you're an ASA member, you can subscribe to Auto-Line by paying \$140 in advance for the first two months service, and \$70 a month thereafter. There is no start-up fee.



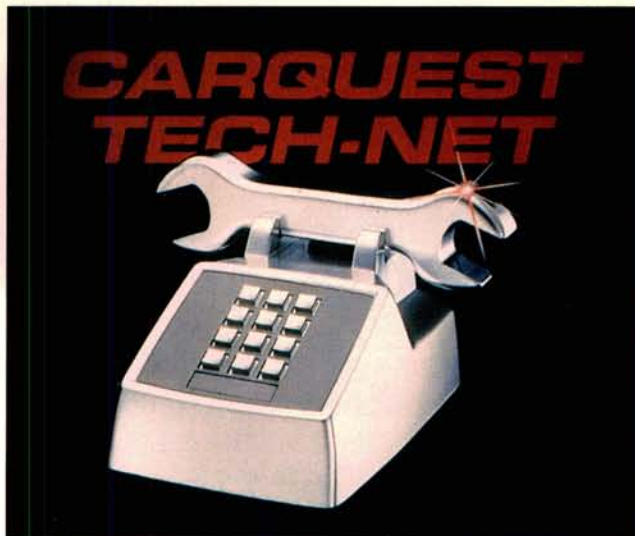
To receive more information about Auto-Line, call 612-633-8007. If you're an ASA member, contact Terri Ruppert at ASA headquarters, 817-283-6205. Or if it's more convenient for you, **circle number 206** on the reader service card if you're an ASA member, **207** if you're not.

TECH-NET

The third hotline we'll look at is TECH-NET. Subscriptions to the hotline are sold through CARQUEST jobbers, but the hotline is operated by a company called Automotive Data Systems. Information in the systems' database comes from manufacturers' manuals, technical service bulletins, aftermarket parts manufacturers, Department of Transportation bulletins, trade magazines, and from information exchanged on the hotline.

According to Terry Gartland, Public Relations Coordinator for CARQUEST, "The best information comes from working with technicians and their real-

life automotive problems, and from our own research." Once a week, the 14 technicians who staff the hotline conduct a vehicle autopsy. They examine a given vehicle to discover all they can about the different systems. These sessions are videotaped so that new hotline staffers can view the tapes to learn about the vehicles.



When you call TECH-NET, they require only a brief evaluation of the vehicle. According to Gartland, "Our people can talk you through just about anything." The hours of operation are 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on the West Coast, and the hotline is closed from 11 until noon for lunch. That makes the East Coast hours 9:00 a.m. through 9:00 p.m. with the lunchtime closing hours from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

If you would like to try TECH-NET, CARQUEST offers a free one month trial subscription. If you decide to sign on after that month, it's \$65 per month. For subscribing, you get a Southwestern Bell cordless telephone to use while calling TECH-NET, access to the hotline's toll-free number, and unlimited use of the hotline.

For more information about TECH-NET, contact the manager at your local CARQUEST store. If there's no CARQUEST store in your area, **circle number 208** on the reader service card to receive more information.

Computerized Information Databanks

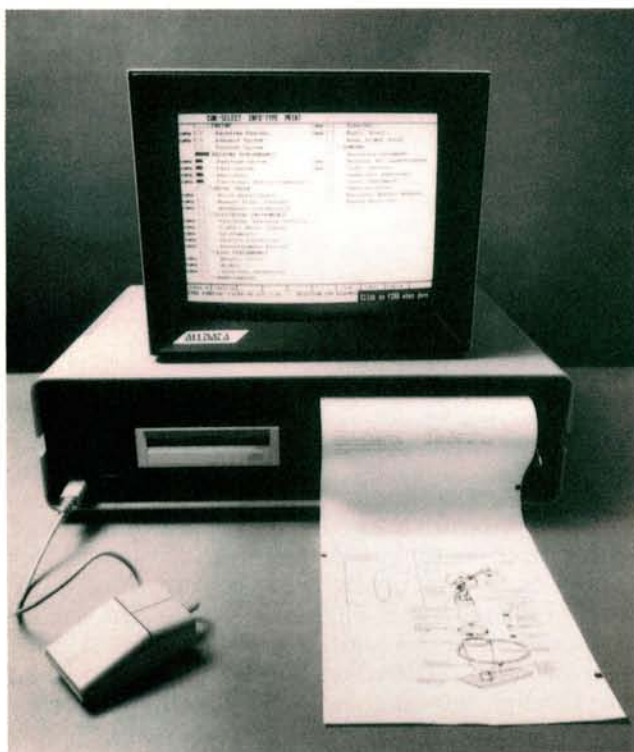
ALLDATA's System 3

ALLDATA Corporation manufactures and markets the Automotive Repair Information System 3, a laser-disc computer system that provides repair, maintenance, and parts and labor information on compact discs. By January 1990, the system will also include all import vehicle wiring diagrams.

According to Rod Georgiu, founder of ALLDATA and former president of a major automotive diagnostic company, "Information is what most technicians have trouble with. So we've spent over seven million dollars

to develop a database that can provide them with this information."

ALLDATA's System 3 offers immediate access to more than 200,000 pages of technical information on import and domestic cars built since 1973, including 64,000 pages of technical service bulletins. The only imports not covered in the system are Ferrari, Lamborghini, and Maserati.



Several components make up the System 3. The main unit houses the system's circuitry, the CD ROM disc drive, and the printer. The system's database resides on ten CD ROM discs, similar to audio compact discs. Data is stored on the discs and read by the disc drive. The printer can print a page of text and graphics in 10-12 seconds. While you're printing one page, you can use the computer to view other data on the screen. The screen is high-resolution black and white. To access information in the system, you use a mouse (pointer) and bring it to the desired location on the screen to enter various menus.

How exactly does the system work? Suppose you're working on a 1987 VW Jetta. You'd use the mouse to go from year, to make, to model, to engine type, and then to symptoms. Once you've gotten the information you need, you can print it out. You can even use that information to sell service to your customers.

In addition, an optional Telepart feature can link you up to parts distributors computerized inventories so that you can find and price the parts you need, and place orders.

The cost of the system is \$6,988. That price includes the hardware and the initial software. If you don't want to purchase the system, it's available for

lease. All of the information in the system is updated quarterly at a cost of \$300 per quarter. Who should buy the system? "Progressive shops that understand the value of information, training, and equipment should consider ALLDATA," says Georgiu.

According to Georgiu, hookup is easy—just two cables to connect. You can teach yourself to use the System 3, but if you've got problems, there are salespeople available to help you. If you have problems with the hardware or software, ALLDATA will arrange to have a replacement unit or information sent the next day. They'll also arrange for pick up of the old unit/information.

To find out more about ALLDATA, or to schedule a demonstration of the unit, call 1-800-666-8008. Or you can **circle number 209** on the reader service card.

Mitchell's ON-DEMAND

Mitchell offers a computerized auto repair information system called ON-DEMAND. ON-DEMAND gives you an equivalent of 100,000 pages of service and repair manuals, diagrams, illustrations—everything Mitchell publishes—plus technical service bulletins stored on compact discs. In the future, estimating information will also be added to the system.



ON-DEMAND covers 1983-89 import and domestic cars and light trucks. The only imports not included in the system are the exotics.

How does the system work? Using a light pen on the screen, you make selections from a menu, such as year, make, and model. Once you've found the information you need, you can print it out if you need hard copies.

The Mitchell system provides you with several different purchase options. If you don't have any computer hardware, you can buy a package that Mitchell put together. The cost is \$4,900 and includes screen, CD ROM disc drive, printer, light pen and light pen card. Or you can get the hardware requirements from Mitchell and purchase the equipment yourself. If you already have a computer, you can purchase the CD ROM disc drive, light pen, and light pen card for \$1,150 through Mitchell. The software is updated quarterly. The introductory cost is \$2,400 for the first year and includes both the import and domestic software. If you buy a second year subscription at the same time, it's an additional \$900. The third year, bought at the same time, is \$800. You can also buy just the import or domestic repair data. The cost for that is \$1,550 for the first year, \$500 for the second, and \$400 for the third, if purchased initially.

According to Ken Young of Mitchell, "The system is simple enough that you can learn it yourself." If you purchase the hardware, an IBM technician will install

it for you. If you have problems with the hardware, either you or Mitchell can call IBM to have it repaired. If something should go wrong with your software, Mitchell will send out replacement discs. In addition, Mitchell has salespeople in the field who can help you.

The salespeople are also available to demonstrate the ON-DEMAND system. For more information or a demonstration, call 1-800-854-7030 or 1-800-421-0159 (California residents). Or you can **circle number 210** on the reader service card.

There are several computer management systems available that also include a bit of technical information. For more information on them, and on technical information offered by manufacturers throughout the United States, refer to our **Information Station** section. And if you've got a great source of technical information, please share it with us. If it's a valid source, we'll run it.

—By Marla Schleider