

AG-NET . . .

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The three main services provided by the computer system include problem solving, information sharing, and acting as an electronic mailbox.

For example, a farmer can calculate crop production costs, consult the latest commentaries and predictions on market trends provided by agriculture specialists, and send a memo to his county agent with the AG-NET system.

Furthermore, most of AG-NET's users have their own home terminal which can be purchased from private

suppliers for \$1,000-\$2,000. Every county agent's office in the state has been equipped with terminals.

If the computer is used through the county agent, the cost is picked up by the Institute of Agriculture. Otherwise, there is a \$10 fee per hour plus telephone costs to Lincoln.

AG-NET mainly serves the Midwest and Pacific Northwest regions, while two other agriculture computer networks cover the Eastern portion of the country. They are the TELPLAN system, originating from Michigan State

University, and the Computer Management Network (CMN), which serves the Eastern seaboard from Virginia Polytechnical Institute.

Ebmier noted that AG-NET differs from these other two systems because it is much simpler to use.

"We've put much more emphasis on programs that are easy to use," he said.

Saying that AG-NET was as easy to use as the telephone, Ebmier emphasized that "you don't have to be a computer programmer to make it work."

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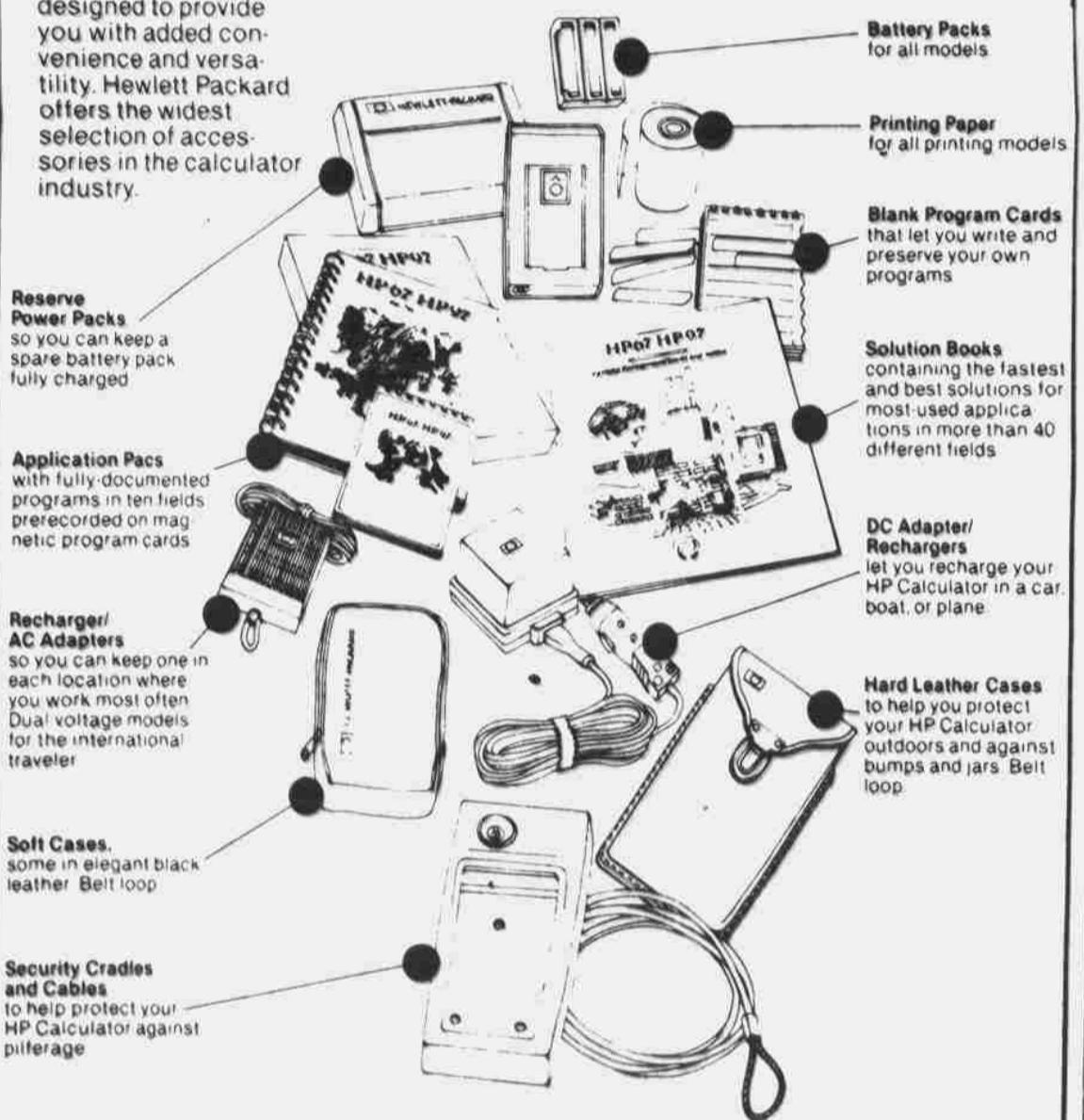
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