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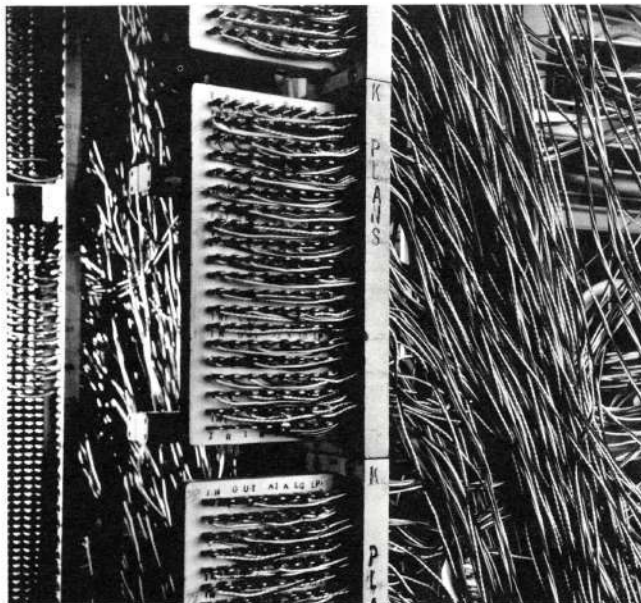
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NEW LONG-DISTANCE PHONE LINES



a Operators (l. to r.) Ellen Reigler, Henrietta Baiersdorfer, and Winifred Carroll, head operator, have “voices with a smile” from New York.

b Wiring panels impose order on seemingly chaotic telephone lines.



The electronic relays start clattering in the equipment room, where the “WATS lines” are wired into the telephone system shared by the Executive and New York Offices. They sound like the telegraph key breaking silence in some lonely railroad station to report that Train 219 left the Junction on schedule.

This new Wide Area Telephone Service (WATS) was installed in April, 1963 after a study had shown that it might make the long-distance telephoning from the two offices in New York more economical. Three of their outgoing trunk lines are now WATS lines, permitting reduced-rate calls to points throughout continental United States except in New York State.

Last year’s study showed that approximately four times as many long-distance calls are made from these offices during the busy season as at other times of the year. A new study after the busy season just past will determine whether savings have in fact resulted from this first year’s experience with the new system.

One WATS line is rented for a flat fee, 24 hours a day, for unlimited calls of unlimited duration. The New York Telephone Company, from which the lines are rented, keeps no record of calls made on this line. It covers an area from Maine to Wisconsin, south to Tennessee, and east again to Georgia. The decrease in the telephone company’s record-keeping helps to keep the phone bill down.

Use of the other two lines, which stretch from coast to coast, is measured by meter much like a home owner’s use of water or electricity. Each of these measured lines is rented at a base rate for 15 hours a month plus a fixed charge for each additional hour. Since the service was installed, these lines have been busy for much more than the minimum 15 hours for which they are leased.

Calls on these two longer lines are charged only for the time they are actually in use, metered by the second. They are not subject to the three-minute minimum charge of regular “station-to-station” calls (one quarter of all calls on the WATS lines have lasted less than three minutes). There is less need for high-rate “person-to-person” calls, which accounted for almost all of the long-distance telephoning of the Executive and New York Offices before the WATS lines were installed. To be sure, WATS-line time may be spent waiting for the person called to get to the telephone.

Urgent long-distance calls are still placed on regular lines if the WATS lines are busy. In the first month after installation, the regular lines were still in use on an average of about three hours a working day. Incoming calls can be placed only on regular lines, not on the WATS lines.

The Bell System expects the number of WATS lines leased to customers throughout the country to triple this year.