ICL ME29 Series

PRODUCT ENHANCEMENT

Since the announcement of the ME29 series in March 1980, ICL has repackaged and expanded the product family. In mid-1981, the Models 35B, 35C, and 37 were announced and the 35/1 and 35/2 withdrawn. Providing upwards compatibility with ICL's 2900 series, the ME29 series replaces the 2903, 2904, and 2905 models.

The ME29 series now consists of four models: 35B, 35C, 37, and 45. The Model 35B is the entry level system, which may be used as a stand alone system or as part of a network. Its main characteristics include main memory capacity ranging from 384K to 1024K bytes, 70 megabytes of disk storage, two floppy disk drives, at least two workstations, and one line printer or up to four matrix printers. Up to eight communication lines may be supported by an optional synchronous multi-line communications coupler, and up to 16 devices (workstations and printers) may be supported by one mandatory and one optional asynchronous multi-line communications coupler. The operating system TME 10 (Transaction Machine Environment 10) is used with Model 35B. Magnetic tape clusters, previously offered as an option with models 35/1 and 35/2, may not be connected to models 35B or 35C. Conversion to Model 37 is necessary if magnetic tape facilities are required.

The Model 35C is similar to the 35B, but provides greater disk storage capacity. From two to sixteen disk drives may be configured, offering from 120 to 8000 megabytes of storage. The TME 30 operating system is required to support the larger disk system.

The Model 37 is the mid-range system, providing 1.3 times the processor power of models 35B and 35C. The main characteristics of the Model 37 include main memory capacity ranging from 512K to 2048K bytes, disk capacity of up to 16,000 megabytes provided by 32 disk drives, one or two floppy disk drives, at least two workstations, and up to three line printers. Communications lines are supported by up to five asynchronous and synchronous multi-line communications couplers.

Features not available with the smaller ME29 models, but offered with the Model 37, include up to four 3551 magnetic tape clusters, up to four 1900 Standard Interface devices, and an Extended Local Terminal Controller (ELTC). An ELTC can be connected to an asynchronous multi-line communications coupler channel to enable up to five devices to be multi-dropped at a maximum distance of two kilometers from the processor. This permits the "local" connection of up to 120 workstations and ICL's "transaction printers," using three couplers. The operating system used with Model 37 is TME 30, the same as that required by Model 35C.

The largest model in the ME29 Series, the Model 45, has similar general characteristics to the Model 37 but uses a faster processor. It offers approximately one and a half times the performance of the Model 37 and twice that of models 35B and 35C. The operating system used with the Model 45 is TME 40, an extension of the TME 30 with additional support for the power boost facility on the Model 45 processor.

In addition to IDMS (Cullinane's Integrated Database Management System), the ME29 also supports a simplified database system, TME-RAPID. This is based on IDMS and is designed for entry level users wishing to gain experience in database techniques. Users requiring greater data management flexibility and additional facilities should use the full version of IDMS.

The selection of line printers and matrix printers formerly provided with the ME29 Series has now been supplemented by ICL's 3541 and 3543 "transaction printers." These 120-cps printers are available with either 80 or 132 print positions and use a bi-directional print head. They are needle mosaic printers suitable for 4-part stationary. The printing speed is 180 lines per minute with a 20 character line. Multinational 96-character sets are standard.

The ME29 competes with IBM System/38 and 4300 Series, Sperry Univac System 80, Honeywell DPS 4, Hewlett-Packard HP 3000, Burroughs B 1900 and Data General Eclipse. It is twice as powerful in one configuration (Model 45) as ICL's now obsolete 2904 which it replaces. ICL is continuing to develop the ME29 Series, with further announcements planned for the end of March 1982.

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EQUIPMENT PRICES

		Purchase Price	Monthly Rental	Quarterly Maintenance
Entry Level System				
ME29/35B	512KB CPU, 2 workstations, 2 35MB disks, 2 1MB floppy disks, 1 matrix printer	£36,000	£1,150	£ 600
Mid-range System				
ME29/37	768KB CPU, 4 workstations, 2 180MB disks, 2 1MB floppy disks, 1 line printer	73,000	2,400	1,700
Large System				
ME29/45	1536KB CPU, 14 workstations, 3 180MB disks, 1MB floppy disks, 2 asynchronous multi-line communications couplers, 2 synchronous multi-line communications couplers, 1 line printer, Magnetic Tape Master and slave (3351)	137,000	4,600	2,565