

If you look hard enough or travel to enough places, you'll run into areas where they still use hard currency, but since it's a lot more convenient to keep your money in electronic form, it's getting rarer every day. Then there's corp scrip, a specialized form of currency that the megacorps issue to do things like pay their employees with. It's no good outside the issuing corp and in theory only authorized corp employees should have it, but in practice there's a thriving black market in corp scrip—one that even has its own underground "stock exchanges."

While we're on the subject, there's actually a thriving black market out there in just about *everything*, tempting you with all sorts of fun and illegal goodies. In these transactions, payment methods are all over the map, from certified credit sticks to hard cash to barter to favors.

SINLESS IN SEATTLE

The SIN, or System Identification Number, can be your best friend or your worst enemy. Without one, it's very difficult to do otherwise simple things like rent an apartment, buy a car, or check into a hotel. *With* one, however, the system can track almost every move you make—what you buy, where you go, what you connect to on the Matrix.

Technically, everybody is supposed to have a SIN (it's illegal not to), but in reality, many people don't. Some had them erased; some lost them when the Matrix went down in '64 and getting a new one was too much of a hassle; some never had one at all because their births were never recorded. The SINless, as they're called, tend to operate outside the system and have a hard time doing anything legitimately, since not having a SIN marks you as either an alien or a person subject to lesser rights.

Of course, the best of both worlds for shadowrunners is to have one—but not their own. Underground services for setting up fake SINs are in high demand, and there's no shortage of customers. Some runners even maintain more than one fake SIN, corresponding to one or more false identities based in different cities and even different countries. If one is discovered, the runner simply dumps it and picks up another.

Be careful, though—if the cops arrest you and you don't have a SIN (or you have one that doesn't match up), they'll assign you a "criminal SIN," which has significantly fewer rights and privileges than a regular one.

THE DOCTOR IS IN

For the most part, medical care comes in two flavors: public and private—which in reality means "rich" and "poor." Thanks to privatized healthcare, most people are forced to throw themselves and their ailments on the not-so-tender mercies of an overstressed public healthcare system. Spirits help you if you're seriously sick or hurt and have to deal with a public hospital: most of them mean well, but they're notoriously understaffed, awash in red tape, and generally a nightmare to navigate—and this is if you have a SIN. If you don't—good luck.

If you're rich (or have the right friends), you have access to all sorts of medical advances, including clone "spares" for

organ replacement, leonization treatments to stay young, state-of-the-art implants, the latest gene therapy, and every other cutting-edge technology medicine has to offer. Even corp citizens, though they don't often have this level of coverage, can take advantage of limited corporate healthcare.

Not sick, but just need "a little work done"? Bodyshops are common, handling basic cybersurgery and cosmetic alterations—things like datajacks, cybereyes, cosmetic bioware, and the like—but as always, it's good to do your homework first since they vary widely in competence and professionalism. If you need something more extensive done and you can make the right connections, "black clinics" with corp-exile surgeons and all kinds of stolen and experimental technologies and techniques can provide whatever enhancements you desire, legal or not.

Savvy shadowrunners don't take chances with these matters—as soon as they've got the cred to do it, most of them sign up for a contract with one of the "armed response" providers like DocWagon or CrashCart. These services will do everything from swooping in to snatch your injured body out of a firefight to bringing you back from the other side of flatlined. Yeah, that little biomonitor and contract are expensive, but when you think about it, what do you own that's more valuable than your life? Just one thing to note, though: if you're going to get yourself shot up, don't do it on megacorp property—these outfits won't cross extraterritorial boundaries without permission, so you'll be out of luck.

WELCOME TO THE MACHINE

Back in the latter part of the last century, futurists and cyber-pundits were all excited about the coming of "ubiquitous computing"—the total integration of computer technology with everyday life. They were right, but they didn't know the half of it. While your average 2070s citizen probably wouldn't think of it in those terms, computers and the Matrix *are* ubiquitous nowadays—in fact, you'd have to try pretty hard to get away from them. Here are a few everyday-life examples—you can check out *The Wireless World*, p. 205, for the full lowdown on using the Matrix for fun and profit.

MATRIX 2.0

The times, they are a-changin', but people are nothing if not adaptable. Even before Crash 2.0 took down the Matrix and caused widespread chaos on multiple fronts, the seeds of wireless network connectivity were already sown. By 2070, the new wireless Matrix is mostly in place, and the whole Matrix model has shifted from wired virtual reality to wireless augmented reality. That's not to say that you can't still go for the full-immersion experience, but AR has proven itself to be more practical in most situations. Most people by now have embraced the new technology, to the point where even the poorest sprawl denizens are likely to have commlinks that connect them to the Matrix on a constant basis. What this means is that everybody's wired (or, rather, wireless) and everybody's connected. For most people, the question isn't *whether* to be connected, but how *much*.