

THE NETWORK IS THE CONSUMER

Every time you go out to the mall or the Stuffer Shack or that new club downtown, you're surrounded by computer networks. Everybody's heard of LANs and WANs, but 2070s society brings a new one: PANs, or Personal Area Networks. People don't just *belong* to networks these days—they *are* networks. All hooked together by a commlink (a combination cellphone, PDA, wallet, and network router), PANs are accessed and controlled by a wide array of useful devices, including goggles, contacts, or cybereyes that let you perceive the sights of augmented reality; headphones or cyberears that give you the sounds; gloves for the touch; clothing that regulates your temperature and lets you change its color with a thought; simsense modules that let you experience sensations, emotions, and even others' senses; weapons and peripherals tied directly into your conscious control; and a whole lot more. It's called a "mesh network," and it means that all your goodies talk to each other seamlessly, keeping each other up to date with status reports and working together to enhance your computing experience.

SHARING THE LOVE

All this PAN stuff is wiz, but just like the dinosaur days of the Internet, networking isn't much fun if you can't share it. When you open up your PAN to the outside world (or whatever part of it you choose to allow in), you open the door to a myriad of interactions. Heading down to the mall to check out the latest gear, you can subscribe your PAN to the mall's network and view *arrows* (AROs, or augmented reality objects) that show you everything from a map of the place to current sales to recommendations your friends have left for you last time they were there. You can connect your commlink to your friends' networks and hold private conversations completely inside your head. You can (if you're not careful) be bombarded by advertising and spam—but you can also hook up with other people who read the profile you're broadcasting and want to meet you. You can play a video game in your head with a friend on another continent as your opponent. In short, pretty much anything you can think of that can be done with a computer, you can do it wherever you happen to be. No wires, no clunky cyberdeck—just you, your commlink, and the airwaves.

Of course, those who want to take things a little further can do a lot more—hacking into systems (including other people's commlinks), controlling vehicles with their thoughts, even injuring other users. That's where the real fun is—but that's a topic for another time and another place (see *The Wireless World*, p. 205).

TAGGING, 2070'S STYLE

What can control shoplifting, keep track of your cat (or your kid, or your employees), mark gang territory, or give you the skinny on that weird statue in the park? If you answered RFID tags, you get a gold star. Radio Frequency Identification tags are even more ubiquitous than Matrix connections in 2070s society, and almost as useful. Since your commlink can read the data on a tag from about 40 meters away, they're used

for all kinds of purposes where some small message needs to be broadcast over a short distance. For instance, every item in almost any store you walk into will have an RFID tag embedded within it, to help track inventory and keep the items from wandering out of the store. They also help you when you're ready to buy—you simply pick up the items you want, they're scanned automatically, and the charge is deducted (with your permission) from your cred balance.

Tags have lots of other functions, too. When viewed with AR, the data from an RFID tag is called a *dot* (DOT, or Digital Object Tag). Some dots are beneficial, helping you find your way around unfamiliar areas or giving you information about local historical sites or areas to avoid. You can also program your own to offer items for sale, look for lost items, or anything else for which your grandmother might have posted flyers on the street corner. Tags also have less savory purposes—corps routinely implant tags in their employees, while gangers use spray-painted dots to mark their turf. Regardless of how they're used, tags are cheap and easy to get, which means the world is awash in them. Better get used to it.

BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING

As wiz as all this technology is, don't think it's all a big hacker party. The downside of the fact that everything's networked and the Matrix is everywhere (especially for shadowy types) is the fact that this gives authorities and other nosy folks the means to make some serious inroads into your privacy, especially when you're out in public.

Sensors and cameras are everywhere, almost every transaction you make is tracked in one way or another, and if you're not careful, your every movement—in the Matrix and in the meat—can be traced, monitored, and analyzed. Paranoid yet? Think of this: in most major sprawls, sensors on every street corner in certain 'hoods can not only monitor sights, sounds, and chemical odors, they're also smart enough to automatically recognize aberrant patterns—say, a gunshot or an abnormally large crowd of people gathering near a business. This info is automatically transmitted to the proper authorities, and unwary miscreants can be in custody before they can say "What happened?" Naturally there are ways around Big Brother, and savvy shadowrunners are wise to study up.

GET YOUR MOJO WORKIN'

Magic is power, and you'd have to live under a rock not to know it. The ability to sling the mojo is something you're born with; if you don't have it, there's nothing out there that's going to give it to you, and if you *do* have it, you've got opportunities not available to your mundane buddies. As you might expect, there are a lot of opinions and popular misconceptions about magic. You can find the nuts and bolts in *The Awakened World*, p. 163, but here's a brief look at how the world at large perceives the magically gifted and their art.

MAGIC IN THE MEDIA

The entertainment industry loves magic. How could they not love something that lets them indulge their desire for tossing around spectacular pyrotechnical effects, weird

