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Q2. Someday I would like to buy a modem and communications program, but I don't know much about either. What programs/modems do members use? Are there features they wish they had.

A2. Several of our more popular meeting topics have been devoted to communications programs. The most popular communications programs have been Terminus, Access /// and MicroTerminal. There is also a new program from On Three called the Communications Manager.

Terminus runs only from within Word Juggler. This is good and bad. It is good, because if WJ is your regular word processor, the files load right in. The bad is you must have WJ and WJ has a line limit of 1700+ lines and a twenty minute session on a BBS can create a 10K file that has too many lines. Terminus is fast, bug free, sets up macros easily and has a good manual. It is great for downloading from a BBS, but it won't upload to some Bulletin Board Systems because it goes too fast. It will continue to send while the BBS buffer is full and is trying to write to a disk. I have had no problems sending to other PCs and commercial BBS systems, like Compuserve, but had considerable problems with local, slower BBS systems.

Access /// is the turtle to Terminus's hare. It is not the fanciest program around, but it can get the job, whatever it may be, done. I tend to use Terminus most of the time, but switch to Access /// when I want to upload a long file to Draco (I have not tried uploading a large file to Draco IV yet, so it may be no problem). There is also a modified (interpreter) version of Access ///, that allows one to have create command text files for auto logon sequences and other additional features not available in the standard version of the A///. The interpreter version is an public domain upgrade for owners of the original version.

I have not used the Communications Manager, but it is advertised to have VT-52 emulation as well as the ability to transmit using Xmodem and Binary II protocol. It will work within The Desktop Manager or standalone. \$49.95 from On Three.

As far as modems are concerned, I would look for an external modem with a full Hayes command set, on-off switch, speaker with volume control and 1200/300 baud capability. If you shop the mail order stores, you should be able to get one meeting these specs for about \$120. The Everex is one that meets these specs. A word of warning, the Apple 1200 baud modem does not have the full Hayes command set, so I would stay away from it unless you get it for less than \$100. Some modems come with a standard RS-232 cable and others don't. If they don't you can buy one from an electronic supply house. You want a male-male 25 pin RS-232 cable for most modems, although there are some nine pin models around. If you are using a modem eliminator with serial printer, the cable you have between the modem eliminator and the printer is probably the cable you need for the modem.

(1992 NOTE: You can get 2400 baud modems now for less than \$100.00 that will work fine on your /// - just make sure it has a 25 pin plug in the back.)