

Don Lancaster's

RESOURCE BIN

number seventy seven

A look at accessing offshore electronics.

Our usual reminder here that the *Resource Bin* is now a two-way column. You can get tech help, consultant referrals and off-the-wall networking on nearly any electronic, *tinaja* questing, personal publishing, money machine, or computer topic by calling me at (520) 428-4073 weekdays 8-5 Mountain Standard Time.

I'm now in the process of setting up my new *Guru's Lair* web site you will find at (where else?) www.tinaja.com This is the place you'll go for instant tech answers. Among the many files in our library, you will find complete reprint sets for all of the *Resource Bin* and other columns. Plus a brand new [Research InfoPack Service](#).

You will get the best results if you have both [Netscape Communicator](#) and [Acrobat Reader 3.0](#) installed.

Offshore Electronics

Nearly all electronic parts are a lot cheaper from the Far East. Sometimes ridiculously so. Especially when you are buying, say, a hundred or more prototype double sided and plated through circuit boards. Where your costs can be one-third to one-fifth as much as purchasing locally. With worldwide express services, delivery might actually be faster than waiting around forever on an old line US parts distributor or on some uncaring local manufacturer.

How can you tap these sources? Is foreign involvement for you?

Firstoff, let's start off with some obvious warnings. If you do not know what you are doing, you are going to get eaten alive.

You probably do know enough to avoid those tiny "Make big money in import/export ads". Most of these old come-ons look exactly like the scams they almost certainly are. And the big time stuff like those "Nigerian Bank Account" ripoffs seem only to fool the extremely greedy or the very gullible.

This one *is* making the rounds once again, so it does seem to be working.

Often, foreign involvement will not be for you. I learned a long time ago that non-US response painfully and repeatedly caused me far more grief than it ever returned me in dollars. I personally have no foreign sales. No funding to provide foreign support has or will be forthcoming. Foreign email is ignored and any letters are returned unopened. My own view is that if you are a success here, you do not need any foreign sales. If you are not, the foreign sales will not help you in the least. Either way, I don't see any point in my seeking these out. Especially after the hassles and grief they have caused me in the past.

If you are genuinely serious about offshore electronics, it will be super important that you learn to speak the language and understand the local customs. Ferinstance, the word "yes" in Japan often does appear to mean something like "I have heard what you said and I understand where you are coming from." In no manner does it mean anything even remotely like "I will definitely and quickly do what you ask". *How* something gets done seems more important than *what* is actually getting accomplished. Simple acts such as exchanging of business cards in the proper manner can be of

NEXT MONTH: Don shows us some startup secrets for your own web site.

profound and long lasting import.

In some other Pacific Rim nations, negotiations are *certain* to *slowly* grind you into oblivion. Taking forever and leaving absolutely nothing for you on the table. As far as bribery, *bakeesh*, or *mordita* go, the question is not if, but just when, how much, and in what

manner. And directed only in those places that will do you the most good.

If you do have the opportunity to travel, *the* place to stop by is Japan's northeastern *Akihabara* district. This is your ultimate world class "radio row" of all time. Consumer electronic and computer bargains abound. One nice site is 203.141.89.34/japantravel Even maps are included here.

At any rate, your 500 pound gorilla for finding offshore electronic parts and assemblies is...

Asian Sources Electronic Components

Asian Sources are a Phillipine based group of a dozen highly successful magazines on Pacific Rim suppliers for products and services. The mag you'd be most likely to want to look at initially is known as *Asian Sources Electronic Components*.

This one is an ongoing fat monthly mostly-ads magazine of 600 pages or so. It is usually Japanese, Korean, and Hong Kong offerings for electronic parts. Since the technical content itself is pretty much vapid surveys and a "boom-rah" boosterism, all your real value here lies in the ads and the contacts they provide for you.

Typical recent editorial coverage was on clock radios, RDS receivers (a somewhat languishing method to add digital time, weather, song, artist, call letters, and emergency alerts to FM broadcasts), oversize television sets, language translators, handheld mikes, speakers, and child monitors.

These people also do offer several free finder services. These include a *SourcesFAX* form, a *3-in-1 inquiry form*, online support, CD ROM, and their personal customer feedback.

One way or another, you tell them what components you are looking for, and they will come up with sources. Not surprisingly, all their magazine advertisers appear to dominate the

results. The closer you come to their mainstream topics, the better this service becomes.

They do give you a monthly CD ROM that started off kinda empty but is certainly becoming more and more useful. These are usually included with each issue of your subscription. Speaking of which, this magazine is not cheap. Prices start at \$80 per year for ordinary mail delivery, and range up to \$165 for premium air service.

Scoring free copies is tricky. If you can find an existing copy of an Asian Source pub, there may be a card or two for a free sample of another title in it. By being patient enough and by carefully using these cards, you can scan all their mags.

Web site is www.asiansources.com

Related Pubs

Actually, *Asian Sources* consists of a bunch of different magazines. You might find some of their other titles of interest as well...

Computer Products
Electronic Components
Electronics
Fashion Accessories
Gifts & Home Products
Hardwares
Multimedia Products
Telecom Sources
Timepieces
Trade & Travel

The main difference between their electronic titles is that *Electronics* is whole systems such as tv sets, DVD players, boom boxes, and whatever, while *Electronic Components* are all the bits and pieces of circuit boards and individual components and minor assemblies. Their "hardwares" title is for drill presses and hinges and the rest of the stuff you'd expect to find at your local hardware store.

Their newest *Trade & Travel* mag bills itself as "The business and travel magazine for international traders." Despite its still skimpy size, this one does appear to have bunches of useful content. Of particular interest is their ongoing *Asian Trade Show Calendar*.

Some Directories

Those CRC press folks have been around for a long time. They are the ones who bring you the *Handbook of Chemistry and Physics* and companion standard reference titles. Their latest free *Everything in Electrical Engineering* flyer lists all sorts of titles. Including offshore access directories...

Singapore and Malaysia Electronics Industry, by Michael Pecht, Donald Beane, and Anand Shukla. 1997, 128 pages \$39.95.

Electronics Industry in Taiwan, by Chung-Shing Lee and Michael Pect. 1997 176 pages \$39.95.

The Korean Electronics Industry, by Joseph Bernstein, Damion Searls, and Martin Peckerar. 144 pages \$39.95.

I have added access links for these titles to www.tinaja.com/amlink01.html

International Magazines

Most technically oriented countries offer at a least a few of the electronic magazines. For years and years, the best anyplace ever was the British *Wireless World*. Which long ago did get combined into *Electronics World*. While a shadow of its former self, this one still features its useful mix of understandable and useful hands-on construction projects intelligently combined with more advanced yet clearly explained topics.

The Dutch have *Elektor Electronics* which does remain a great hobby construction mag. A few years back, there was a US version, but this mag apparently folded for lack of enough advertising support. Possibly the *Audio Amateur* still does have a few odd copies remaining.

The *CMP Publishing* folks are well known here for their *E.E. Times* and *Computer Reseller* trade journals, plus many others. It turns out they also have a lot of international titles...

Cabling & Networking (Italy)
Design & Elektronik (Germany)
E.E. Times Taiwan (Taiwan)
Electronic Times (England)
Markt & Technik (Germany)
Micro Electronics (Taiwan)
Mundo Electronico (Spain)
Nikkei Electronics (Japan)
PCB International (EEC)
PCB Magazine (Italy)
Productronica (Spain)
Selezione Di Elettronica (Italy)
Technologies Magazine (Isreal)
What's New in Electronics Europe
What's New in Electronics UK

Here's a listing of some of the other international technical trade journals from a stunning variety of worldwide publishers...

Asia Computer Weekly
Audio-Video International
Australian Electronics Engr

new from DON LANCASTER

ACTIVE FILTER COOKBOOK

The sixteenth (!) printing of Don's bible on analog op-amp lowpass, bandpass, and highpass active filters. De-mystified instant designs. **\$28.50**

CMOS AND TTL COOKBOOKS

Millions of copies in print worldwide. THE two books for digital integrated circuit fundamentals. About as hands-on as you can get. **\$28.50** each.

RESEARCH INFOPACKS

Don's instant cash-and-carry flat rate consulting service. Ask any reasonable technical question for a detailed analysis and complete report. See www.tinaja.com/info01 for specifics. **\$79.00**

INCREDIBLE SECRET MONEY MACHINE II

Updated 2nd edition of Don's classic on setting up your own technical or craft venture. **\$18.50**

LANCASTER CLASSICS LIBRARY

Don's best early stuff at a bargain price. Includes the CMOS Cookbook, The TTL Cookbook, Active Filter Cookbook, PostScript video, Case Against Patents, Incredible Secret Money Machine II, and Hardware Hacker II reprints. **\$119.50**

LOTS OF OTHER GOODIES

Tech Musings V or VI	\$24.50
Ask the Guru I or II or III	\$24.50
Hardware Hacker II, III or IV	\$24.50
Micro Cookbook I	\$19.50
PostScript Beginner Stuff	\$29.50
PostScript Show and Tell	\$29.50
Intro to PostScript Video	\$29.50
PostScript Reference II	\$34.50
PostScript Tutorial/Cookbook	\$22.50
PostScript by Example	\$32.50
Understanding PS Programming	\$29.50
PostScript: A Visual Approach	\$22.50
PostScript Program Design	\$24.50
Thinking in PostScript	\$22.50
LaserWriter Reference	\$19.50
Type 1 Font Format	\$16.50
Acrobat Reference	\$24.50
Whole works (all PostScript)	\$380.00
Technical Insider Secrets	FREE

BOOK-ON-DEMAND PUB KIT

Ongoing details on Book-on-demand publishing, a new method of producing books only when and as ordered. Reprints, sources, samples. **\$39.50**

THE CASE AGAINST PATENTS

For most individuals, patents are virtually certain to result in a net loss of sanity, energy, time, and money. This reprint set shows you Don's tested and proven real-world alternatives. **28.50**

BLATANT OPPORTUNIST I

The reprints from all Don's Midnight Engineering columns. Includes a broad range of real world, proven coverage on small scale technical startup ventures. Stuff you can use right now. **\$24.50**

RESOURCE BIN I

A complete collection of all Don's Nuts & Volts columns to date, including a new index and his master names and numbers list. **\$24.50**

FREE SAMPLES

Check Don's Guru's Lair at <http://www.tinaja.com> for interactive catalogs and online samples of Don's unique products. Searchable reprints and reference resources, too. Tech help, hot links to cool sites, consultants. email: don@tinaja.com

FREE US VOICE HELPLINE VISA/MC

SYNERGETICS
Box 809-NV
Thatcher, AZ 85552
(520) 428-4073

FREE Catalog: <http://www.tinaja.com>

AN OFFSHORE ELECTRONICS RESOURCE SAMPLER

All Shore Industries
1 Edgewater Plaza
Staten Island NY 10305
(800) 959-0548

Arizona Mexico Comm
1700 W Washington Ste 180
Phoenix AZ 85007
(602) 542-1345

Asian Sources
1020 Church St
Evanston IL 60201
(847) 475-1900

Audio Amateur
Box 576
Peterborough NH 03458
(603) 924-9464

Bentley Auctioneers
3801 Academy Pkwy N NE
Albuquerque NM 87109
(505) 344-1812

Books in Print
121 Chanlon Rd
N Providence NJ 07974
(908) 464-6800

CMP Publishing
600 Community Dr
Manhasset NY 11030
(516) 562-5000

Compliance Engineering
1 Tech Drive
Andover MA 01810
(508) 681-6600

CRC Press
2000 Corporate Blvd NW
Boca Raton FL 33431
(800) 272-7737

EE Times
600 Community Dr
Manhasset NY 11030
(516) 562-5000

Electronic Components
1020 Church St
Evanston IL 60201
(847) 475-1900

Electronic News
Box 1051
Southeastern PA 19398
(215) 630-0951

Electronics Magazine
1020 Church St
Evanston IL 60201
(847) 475-1900

Heathkit
PO Box 1288
Benton Harbor MI 49022
(616) 982-3200

InternationalBusiness
10711 Burnet Rd Ste 305
Austin TX 78758
(512) 873-7761

New Media
901 Marin Is Blvd #365
San Mateo CA 94404
(415) 573-5170

Oxbridge
150 5th Ave #202
New York NY 10011
(212) 741-0231

Panel Components
PO Box 115
Oskaloosa IA 52577
(800) 662-2290

SW Auction Weekley
Box 61104
Phoenix 85082
(602) 994-4512

Synergetics
Box 809
Thatcher AZ 85552
(520) 428-4073

TTA Communications
12 Falcon Gate Dean Rd
Bristol, SG UK BS37 5NH
44 (0) 1454 318 722

Ulrich's Dictionary
121 Chanlon Rd
New Providence NJ 07974
(908) 771-7714

United Parcel Service
55 Glenlake Pkwy NE
Atlanta GA 30328
(800) 782-7892

Upside
2015 Pioneer Court
San Mateo CA 94403
(650) 377-0959

Wireless World/EW
The Quadrant, Sutton
Surrey SM2 5AS ENG
01-652-3128

Asian Electronics Engineer
Business Travel Asia Pacific
Canadian Electronics
Currency Alert: Asia
Currency Alert: Latin America
EDN Asia
EDN China
EDN Europe
EIC Electronique
Electronic Business Asia
Electronic Commerce Report
Electronics & Comm in Japan
Electronics Foreign Trade
EPIT Electrosources
Global Electronics
Intl Jnl of Electronic Commerce
Japan Consumer Electronics Scan
Pacific Telecommunications
Test & Measurement Europe
TWICE

Way over on the nontechnical side *International Business* can be a useful trade journal. Subtitled *Strategies for the Global Marketplace*. It is from *New Media Publications* and their website is at www.internationalbusiness.com And *Upside* is a Silicon Valley Yuppie tech management mag that occasionally has useful international info in it.

Technical Support

A number of firms offer offshore assembly that gets combined with US engineering and technical support. These folks tend to advertise in such trade magazines as *Electronics News* or *Electronic Buyer's News*.

One random sample example is *All Shore Industries* at www.allshore.com Their specialties do appear to be pc

boards and assemblies combined with global sourcing and procurement.

One resource for strong technical support on most anything involving international cord sets and connectors is *Panel Components Corporation*. These folks have a fat catalog chock full of international power specs.

As usual, really fine information on international standards can be found in *Compliance Engineering*.

Most of the main package delivery services offer international services. Your obvious starting point here will be www.ups.com.

Some Additional Web Sites

A nice collection of international web sites hosted by *Arizona Central* appears at www.azcentral.com/community/azmex/amcintweblinks.shtml Some of their links include...

Asia Development Bank
Bureau of Export Administration
Environmental Protection Agency
Export Legal Assistance Network
International Monetary Fund
International Trade Administrations
Japan External Trade Organization
National Trade Data Bank
Phoenix Export Assistance Center
SCORE Program
Trade Compass
Trade Point USA's I-Trade
Trade Port
NABank
NAFTA Small Business Information
United Nations Trade Development
US Agency for Intl Development
Virtual Africa

Arizona Central gets involved with that *Arizona-Mexico Commission* where you can find more information on the *Maquiladora* and its related twin-cities programs. These let you combine US engineering and "offshore" assembly.

They might also provide you with useful consultant referrals.

A potentially interesting web site that targets international telecomm is the *Open World Markets* site from *TTA Communications*. They bill themselves as the "World's first On-line technical information service for international telecommunications manufacturers". Their web site is www.ttauk.com. This one is a fee based service.

Yet another useful resource is up at www.asia-inc.com. Their site includes far east business news, along with a searchable database plus an Asian internet directory. For more personal business news, job hunting, and for extensive online links, you might also want to check www.asiaville.com.sg

The content at www.chinabig.com is a comprehensive online Yellow Pages and bilingual resource.

Finally, look into www.asiatrade.com that claims to have everything in Asia from travel to insurance, import to export, conventions to banking. Even online betting.

This Month's Contests

For our contests this month, just tell me about a useful foreign electronics access resource I don't already know about. Or tell me some horror story which involves you and an offshore

whatever. Please skip the "Are you bringing anything back?" "I hope not." jokes. Or else add to our technical education dialog.

There should be a largish pile of my new *Incredible Secret Money Machine II* books going to the dozen or so better entries, plus an all-expense-paid (FOB Thatcher, AZ) *tinaja quest* for two that will go to the very best of all.

To be fair to everyone, all entries must be written and submitted via snailmail. Send all your *written* entries to me here at *Synergetics*, rather than to *Nuts & Volts* editorial.

Further Help

A reminder that one of the best ways to find info on any magazine anywhere in the world is by way of the *Oxbridge Media Finder* stashed at www.mediafinder.com. If that one does not work, and if the usual web tools don't help, there's always good old *Ulrich's Periodicals Dictionary* on the reference shelf at your local library. I sure do hope that Ulrich's eventually gets freely on line. So far, they haven't the foggiest clue that they've already clearly been done in by an aggressive "free info" online stance at Oxbridge. To me, Ulrich's clearly seems about to become roadkill.

One good source for book info is *Amazon Books*, reached by way of my www.tinaja.com/amlink01.html. Once again, *Books in Print*, as your original horse's whatever source seems to be in dire jeopardy because of their lack

of free online support.

I guess there's an obvious hidden message buried somewhere here. One of the big reasons that you have to even think about going offshore for electronics parts and products is the utterly abysmal lack of electronics education in the US. Very few high schools offer anything at all in the way of electronics training. Trade schools largely have dried up as their federal subsidies vanished. Some that remain are of questionable quality. Quite a few community colleges are either discontinuing their electronics programs outright or sharply cutting back on them. Caused mostly by the aerospace downsizing a decade ago.

Lots of old-line distributors have now made it outrageously difficult to cheaply pick up a few parts. But new sources such as www.questlink.com do seem to be picking up on the slack. *Heathkit* is pretty much gone as a personal learning resource. Although they still do host quality educational electronics on a low profile basis. Electronic kits in general are largely in disarray. For the simple reason that nobody knows how to solder any more. Other more informal technical education sources (such as ham radio clubs) have pretty much lost much of their relevance.

To me, all of this is shooting your seed corn in the foot. It also seems monumentally and incredibly short sighted. One useful side effect: there are now mind-boggling great auction

buys as the schools fold their classes. See the www.auctionadvisory.com link from *Southwest Auction Weekly* and others on www.tinaja.com/beewb01.html for the latest auction info. Or the great *Bentley's Auctions* link you'll find on www.tinaja.com/dntkwb01.html These fine people at Bentleys can be your ultimate source for quality electronic test gear. Offered by the semi load.

Or check out [RESBN73.PDF](#) and my *Resource Bin* reprints for the insider electronic auction secrets. Or do visit www.barg01.html for all of the goodies themselves.

Custom assistance in pinning down any electronic component or service is found at www.tinaja.com/info01.html

Let's hear from you. There's some exciting new opportunities here that you just may be able to tap. ♦

Microcomputer pioneer and guru Don Lancaster is the author of 35 books and countless tech articles. Don maintains his no-charge US tech helpline found at (520) 428-4073, besides offering all of his own books, reprints, and consulting services. Don also offers a free catalog full of his unique products and resource secrets. The best calling times are 8-5 on weekdays, Mountain Standard Time.

Don is the webmaster of his Guru's Lair found at <http://www.tinaja.com>

Full reprints and preprints of all Don's columns and ongoing tech support appear here. You can reach Don at Synergetics, Box 809, Thatcher, AZ 85552. Or send any messages to don@tinaja.com

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