

III-8-1 Making post offices into information centers for local communities

(1) Promotion of One-Stop Administrative Service

Since fiscal 1999, users will be able to obtain a copy of one's resident card and others.

Since fiscal 1997, MPT has been conducting pilot studies of One-Stop Administrative Services, and from fiscal 1999, their scope was widened to include expanded and advanced services. Under the projects, people can access local government departments by computer, using terminals located in post offices. Information can be provided and various administrative procedures can then be conducted online.

During fiscal 1999, some local governments will also install terminals at post offices that can automatically issue certain local government documents, such as proof of residency and certificates confirming the authenticity of personal seals, which are frequently used in place of signatures in Japan.

1. Expanded One-Stop Administrative Service experiment

In March 1999, MPT began pilot studies of an expanded version of One-Stop Administrative Service at post offices in 12 municipalities in five prefectures across Japan (Fig. 1). In comparison with the experiments conducted in fiscal 1997, the latest tests include an expanded range of accessibility. People can contact local government offices in neighboring cities and towns and a wider variety of services is available, such as searching library catalogues and reserving books, booking the use of public facilities, or gaining information on such topics as di-

saster prevention measures (Fig. 2).

MPT also plans another experiment in fiscal 1999 which will allow residents to consult local government staff about pensions, educational issues and so on, using video phones that are to be attached to the information terminals at post offices.

2. Advanced One-Stop Administrative Service experiment

From February to March 1999, MPT carried out advanced One-Stop Administrative Service experiments in Sapporo City, Hokkaido Prefecture, aimed at enabling users to apply for some administrative services (e.g., notification or report to MPT by telecommunications carriers of their revised communications charges) from information terminals installed at post offices.

The specific application process adopted in the experiments was as follows: 1) Users sent application documents for certain services electronically to Sapporo Central Post Office using information terminals at neighboring post offices; 2) Content of these documents were certified using the Electronic Content-Certified Mail Service System at Sapporo Central Post Office, and, 3) These content-certified documents were mailed to public offices in charge of the services.

These experiments enabled technical assessments on electronic content-certifying functions.

Table 1 Sites of Expanded One-Stop Administrative Service experiments in fiscal 1998

Nagano Prefecture	Matsumoto City, Hata Town (Higashi-chikuma County)
Aichi Prefecture	Okazaki City, Kouta and Nukata Towns (Nukata County)
Kochi Prefecture	Kochi and Nankoku Cities
Kagoshima Prefecture	Uken Village (Oshima County), Setouchi Town (Oshima County)
Okinawa Prefecture	Ishigaki City, Taketomi and Yonaguni Towns (Yaeyama County)

Table 2 Types of service provided in fiscal 1998

Reservation/application services	Information distribution services
Reservation of public facilities	Excerpts from gazettes
Library book search and reservation	Recycle information
Application for educational courses	Administrative services (application/notification, etc.), contact point information
Application for approval of fire usage	Tourist information
Requests for visits by welfare personnel	Event information
Application for obtaining or renting tools in need daily	Public facility information
Application for obtaining documents on public services	Disaster prevention information

(2) Construction of Yusei Information Plaza

Experimental information hubs have been created to help revitalize city centers.

With the aim of presenting models of “multimedia” post offices, and thereby contributing to revitalization of central city districts, in April 1999 MPT opened “Yusei Information Plazas” in three locations nationwide (Table).

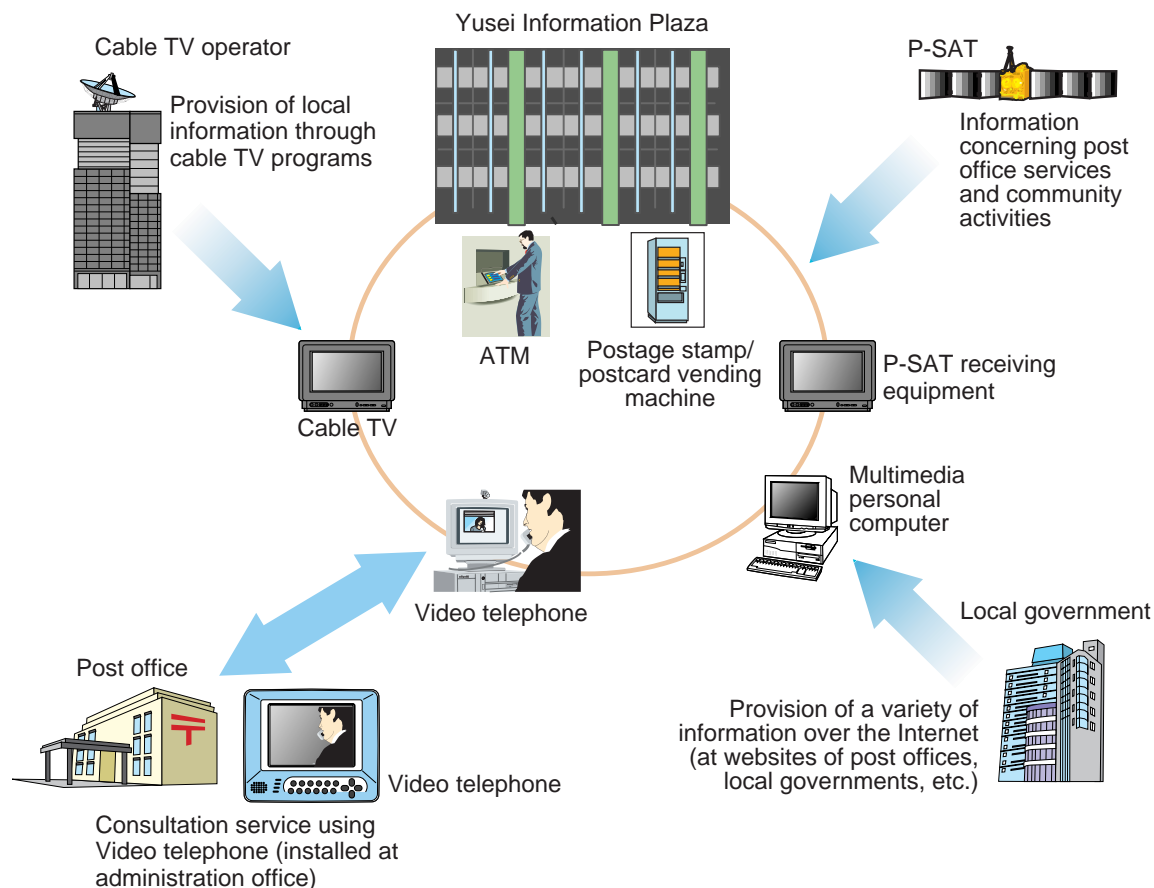
Yusei Information Plazas serve local communities as information centers through provision of: 1)

postal services via automatic terminals and vending machines for postage stamps and postcards installed at post offices; 2) services, such as consultations by video telephone, using advanced multimedia communications technology, and 3) information on services available at post offices as well as community news (Fig.).

Table Sites of Yusei Information Plaza

Location	Gifu City (Gifu Prefecture)	Okayama City (Okayama Prefecture)	Ginowan City (Okinawa Prefecture)
Address	1-5, Yanagase-dori	3-5-12, Omote-cho	1-1-10, Futenma
Hours	10:00 - 19:00	10:00 - 19:00	11:00 - 19:00
Closed	Thursdays	Tuesdays	Tuesdays
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large event space being rented out for local events • 24-hour postage stamp/postcard vending machine service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video telephones used for inquiring about postal services can also be used to ask for information about Okayama City's administrative services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airing of cable TV and P-SAT programs on a large screen • High-speed Internet service through use of the cable TV network as an access line • 24-hour postage stamp/postcard vending machine service
Contact	Gifu Central Post Office	Okayama Central Post Office	Ginowan Post Office

Fig. Outline of Yusei Information Plaza



III-8-2 Improvement of network services

(1) Promotion of open networks in postal savings services

Interconnection of postal savings networks with those of other financial institutions has largely improved user convenience.

MPT has been promoting the interconnection of postal savings networks with those of financial institutions in Japan, aiming to provide better and more convenient services for customers.

1. Interconnection of ATMs and CDs

In January 1999, some 17,900 automatic teller machines (ATMs) and cash dispensers (CDs) at post offices were connected online with some 11,800 ATMs and CDs at 115 financial institutions throughout Japan. This arrangement has enabled holders of postal savings accounts to withdraw money from the ATMs or CDs of participating financial institutions, whose account holders in turn can use post office ATMs or CDs.

In fiscal 1999, MPT will also improve efficiency in account settlement procedures between these fi-

ancial institutions, by arranging a method to supplement a portion of the fund to be settled between these financial institutions with the fund transferred to postal savings accounts by bank account holders, and vice versa.

2. Money remittance arrangement with financial institutions

MPT and financial institutions will interconnect their money transfer networks to enable money remittance from postal giro accounts to bank accounts, and *vice versa*, through much simplified procedures. For this, a system will be developed encompassing postal giro accounts and bank accounts with the launch of this service scheduled for fiscal 1999.

Promoting use of the post office network

Fig. 1 Interconnection of ATMs and CDs

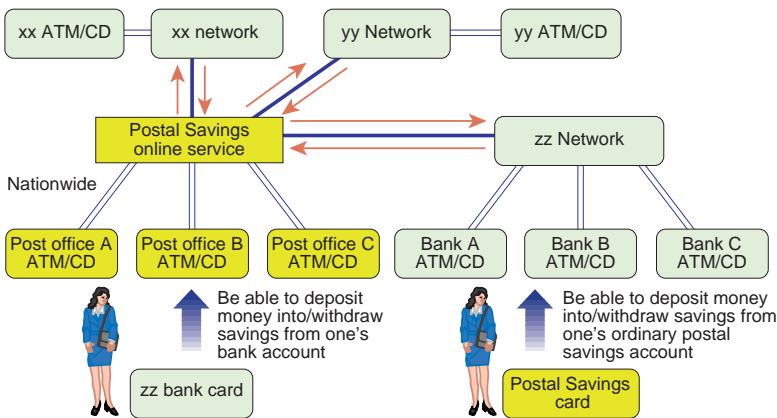


Fig. 2 Mutual money remittance arrangement

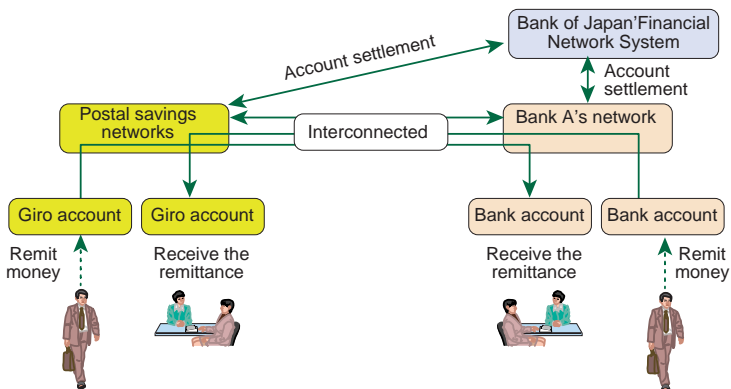


Table Financial institutions in tie-up with MPT (as of March 31, 1999)

City banks	2
Trust banks	6
Member banks of the association of regional banks	7
Member banks of the second association of regional banks	41
Foreign banks	1
Shinkin banks	223
Credit unions	2
Labor banks	41
Japan Agricultural Cooperatives	1
Securities companies	1
Security investment trusts companies	1
Life insurance companies	8
Credit sales companies	45
Card companies affiliated to banks	7
Total	386

(2) Field trials on Postal Savings IC card

Trials were carried out on a Postal Savings IC card embedded with electric money functionality.

As integrated circuit (IC) cards excel in terms of security and storage capacity in comparison with magnetized cards, their use in paying for goods and services is increasing around the world. Against this backdrop, in February 1998 MPT launched a pilot project to introduce IC cards for postal savings accounts in place of magnetized cards.

The trial took place in commercial premises near the main railway station in Omiya City, Saitama Prefecture. Users of the IC cards were able to make cashless purchases at supermarkets and conve-

nience stores, as well as pay for calls made from public telephones, in addition to conventional deposits and withdrawals of money from their accounts (Fig.).

A total of 59,012 IC cards had been issued by 31 January 1999, used for 54,231 transactions worth a total 79,441,542 yen. On average, 1,465 yen was spent per transaction, indicating that IC cards were in general used to pay for goods or services worth relatively small sums of money (Table).

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Promoting use of post the office network

Fig. 1 System of Postal Savings IC cards

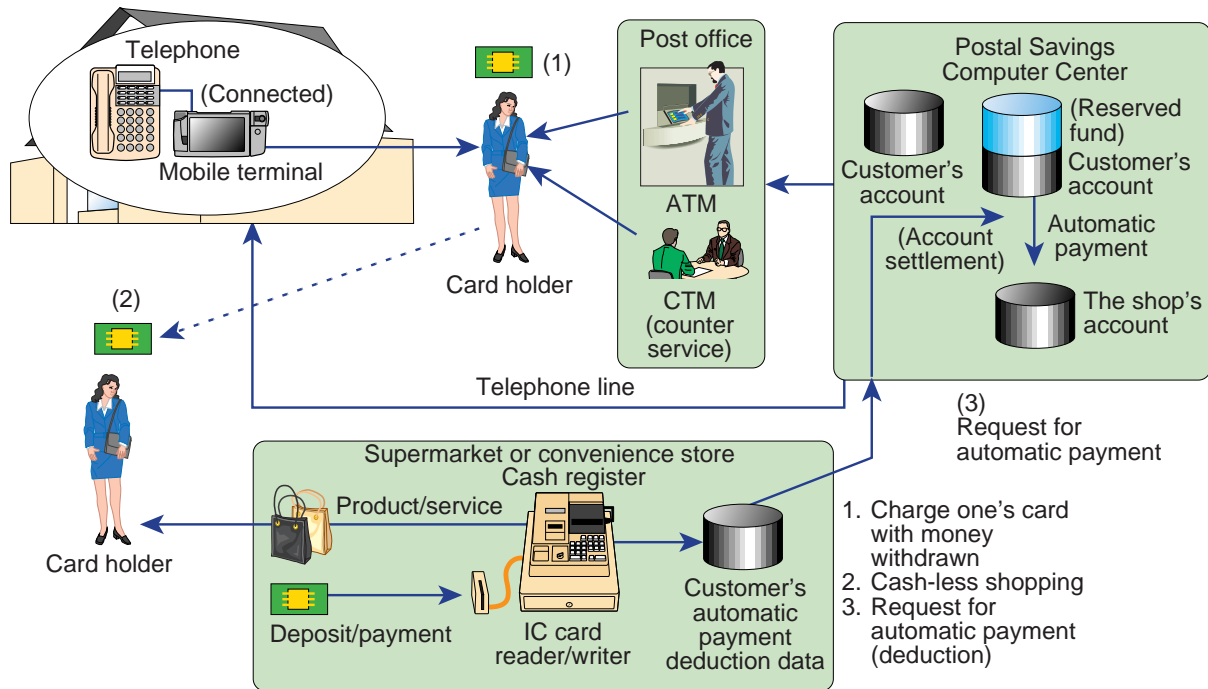


Table Transactions carried out in the trials (as of January 31, 1999) (Unit: Number, yen)

		Accumulated	Monthly average
Total	Total value	54,231	4,519
	(Average per transaction)	79,441,542	6,620,129
	Number of transactions	1,465	—
At supermarkets	Total value	22,274	1,856
	(Average per transaction)	49,651,971	4,137,664
	Number of transactions	2,229	—
At convenience stores	Total value	18,644	1,554
	(Average per transaction)	14,297,843	1,191,487
	Number of transactions	767	—
At department stores	Total value	2,650	221
	(Average per transaction)	12,031,918	1,002,660
	Number of transactions	4,540	—
At public telephones	Total value	1,726	144
	(Average per transaction)	58,250	4,854
	Number of transactions	34	—
At transport service	Total value	8,937	745
	(Average per transaction)	3,401,560	283,463
	Number of transactions	381	—

(3) Launch of debit card service

Debit card service began in January 1999.

Debit cards can be used to make instantaneous payments from bank accounts, enabling holders to buy goods or services without using cash. Telecommunication networks connecting bank computer centers with debit card terminals installed in shops and other businesses make this service possible. Payments are made through the networks by transferring money from purchasers' bank accounts to shops' bank accounts. In several European countries, debit cards are used as widely as credit cards.

Debit card services were initiated in Japan in January 1999 with the participation of eight shops and eight financial institutions, including MPT's postal savings unit.

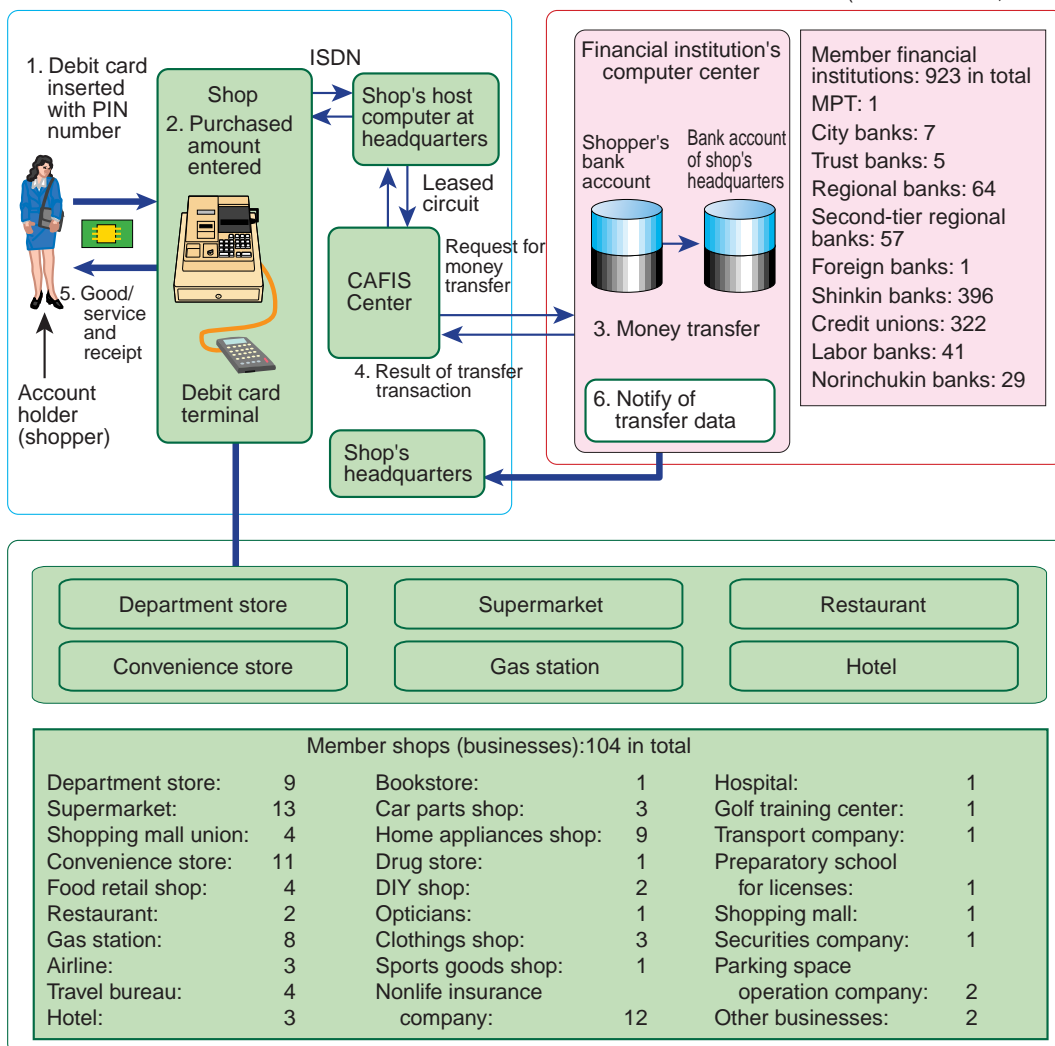
The Japan Debit Card Promotion Association (JDCPA) was established in June 1998, comprising

financial institutions, distribution companies and other businesses. As of 31 March 1999, it had a membership of 923 financial institutions and 104 businesses. JDCPA adopted "J-Debit" as the brand name of its debit-card service.

From March 2000, debit card services will be improved significantly. Account settlement procedures will be made much more efficient by the establishment of a clearance center, which will comprehensively handle account settlement data between shops and financial institutions. In addition, anyone who holds an account at a member financial institution (about 300 million in terms of the number of bank cards issued) will be able to use the debit card service at any participating business, thereby dramatically improving user convenience.

Fig. Outline of debit card service

(as of March 31, 1999)



Related site: The Japan Debit Card Promotion Association (<http://www.debitcard.gr.jp/>)

Promoting use of the post office network

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(4) Verification experiments on Internet home service

Verification experiments on Internet home service by MPT's postal savings unit is scheduled for January 2000.

In January 2000, MPT plans to begin tests of on-line services in the area of postal savings, aimed at providing people with safe and easy-to-use services at home, via the Internet.

In the test project, 20,000 members of the public will be invited to receive the following Internet-based services: 1) money remittances between postal savings accounts (telegraphic transfer to giro accounts); 2) delivery of cash to residences through the telegraphic transfer service; 3) account settle-

ments for shopping online; 4) payment for financial products bought from the websites of private financial institutions, and 5) provision of information and responses to inquiries about postal savings services.

For experimental purposes, half the participants will be given IC cards embedded with an authentication function aimed at ensuring high security in transactions.

Fig. Outline of verification experiments on Internet home service

