

It's a Computer... No, It's a Communications Module... No, It's a John!

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Did You Miss out on the iLoo?

What an idea! Too bad Kohler or Delta didn't think of this. An April 30, 2003, press release from a British subsidiary of Microsoft Corporation announced that it has created a portable toilet with a built-in Internet terminal. This creative new product is to be released throughout Britain this summer. The press release goes into minute detail about every aspect of the new Internet-equipped toilet. There is so much information that Reuters was able to prepare a drawing of the proposed toilet.

It's a Fake! No, It's Real! No, It's...

On May 5, 2003, Microsoft Corporation in Redmond, WA, issued a press release announcing that the iLoo press release was a hoax perpetrated by

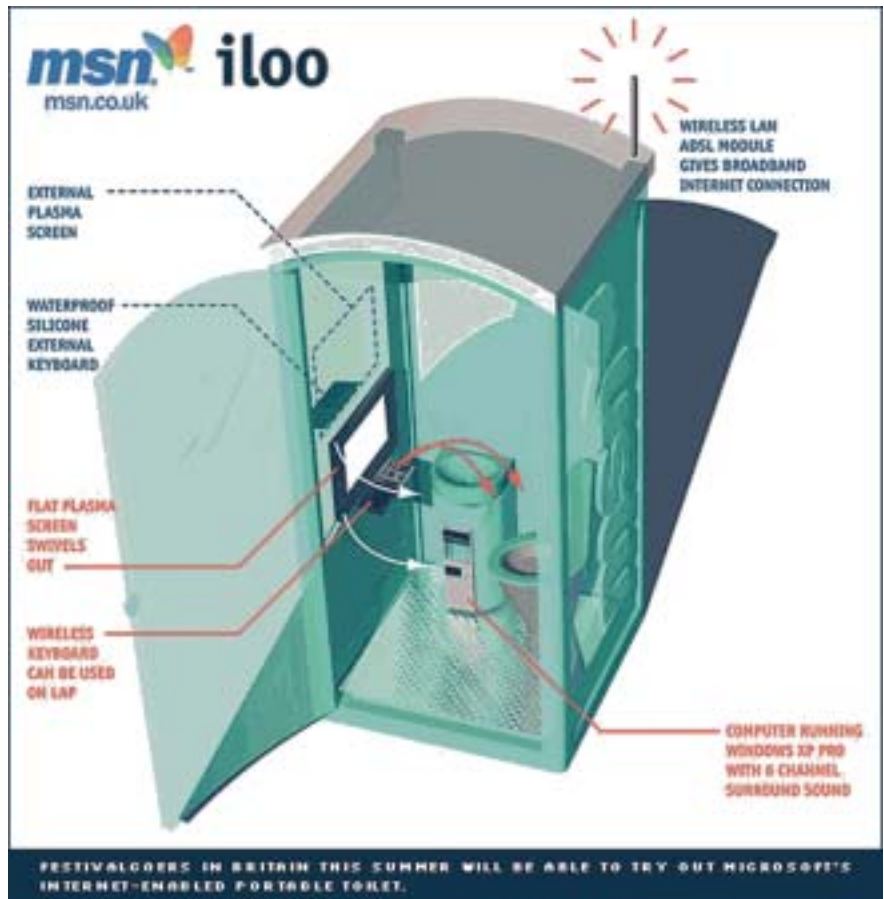
those fun-loving British Microsoft employees. The next day, Microsoft reversed itself and said that the iLoo really was a product idea. And, then, later again, the Microsoft spokesman said that, because

"If there's one thing that's been missing from my life, it's the ability to surf the Web and check e-mail while sitting on the toilet."

of the publicity, the idea was being scrapped.

But Whose Idea Was It?

In an interview with Adamson Rust of INQ, a man named Andrew Cubitt claims that Microsoft appropriated his concept of "surf while you sit." Cubitt claims to have designed and produced his iLoo product for his degree in product design and engineering at Brunel University. Cubitt said, "Mine did everything that the Microsoft one is meant to do, but additionally printed



information on toilet paper and didn't use a keyboard for the interface due to hygiene reasons. What seems to be definite was that they were certainly not the first to come up with the idea." Also, "As it was designed at the university, they own the partial rights to the product, so they will be watching the Microsoft 'invention' very closely."

Some Comments from Mad Dog

An Internet column called Mad Dog has some interesting comments:

There will be a computer under the sink, six-channel surround sound, a flat-screen monitor, and a waterproof wireless keyboard you can put on your lap. Go ahead, let your mind run rampant. If there's one thing that's been missing from my life, it's the ability to surf the

Web and check e-mail while sitting on the toilet.

The iLoo, which will probably be renamed Surf-n-Squat if and when it shows up here in the U.S., will look pretty much like any other portable toilet from the outside, which isn't surprising since porta-potties pretty much qualify as public art.

Do you have any idea how irritating it will be to be chatting with a friend online and have to keep typing, "Hang on, I need to reboot the toilet"?

Actually, it's hard to believe anyone will want to hang out in the iLoo very long. At least not anyone who has a functioning sense of smell. Unless, that is, Microsoft uses the "Aromatherapeutic Homecare

Cleaning Products" put out by a company in Minneapolis. Their "powerful chemicals with the pleasure of aromatherapy" have my housecleaning vote.

Tongue in Cheek: To the Max

What's really intriguing about this whole hoax is some supposed questions and answers supplied by a Tracy Blacher, who is credited as being a consumer marketing manager for MSN. (These questions and answers have appeared in various publications and have been shown on the Internet.)

Q: Is MSN worried that the iLoo will be open to public vandalism?

A: There will be a security guard manning the iLoo 24/7 to ensure no vandalism or theft takes place.

Q: Will users of the iLoo be charged, and, if so, at what rate?

A: The MSN iLoo will be completely free of charge. The aim of the iLoo is to illustrate MSN's mission to deliver an Internet experience from any device at any time.

Q: There is no mention in the press release itself of how the iLoo will be kept clean. Is it automated, or will you have staff at the iLoo?

A: Again, similar to the security guard, there will be a cleaner on hand to make sure the iLoo is kept up to a proper standard. We have also built in a high-tech vacuum system in the flush similar to an airplane loo to ensure maximum cleanliness!

ASPE Is Ready

As soon as the iLoo becomes a reality, the *ASPE Data Book* will add a chapter on designing and specifying the iLoo. ■

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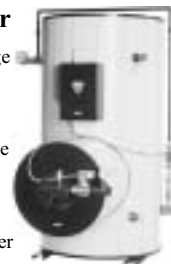
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