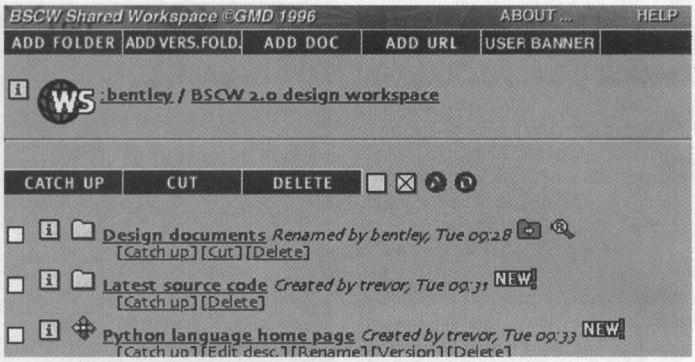
makes optimum use of network resources and no hardware upgrades are needed.

The quality of audio and video over the Net is quite restrictive; however, new protocols, the MBone, and adaptive applications point the way toward the QoS we're going to get in a few years. But don't expect the multimedia equivalent of a free lunch. Clients will require an ISDN connection in order to get optimal video quality.

Until the Net is upgraded to better handle multimedia applications and there is smoother integration among today's LANs and WANs, the optimum solution would seem to be a system that runs across all main media types (e.g., LANs, Public Switched Telephone Network [PSTN], ISDN, and TCP/IP). Cybertec's (Newton Abbot, U.K.) V-COM software meets these requirements.

V-COM has a software codec, so transmission speed depends on the PC, the modem, and, in the case of the Net, the time of day (because of the variable delay). However, Cybertec says that V-COM brings 24 color frames per second on an analog line using a 28.8-Kbps modem and approximately 4 to 5 fps over the Net. It also allows interactive, real-time application sharing and whiteboarding. Expect to see more all-in-one videoconferencing solutions of this kind hitting the market fairly soon.

So ignore the hype and accept the current limitations of the Net. If you need to collaborate with colleagues, clients, and the like, the Net is going to be the medium of choice for people who pay their own phone bills. Services will improve, and collaborative multimedia applications are coming. B



Shared workspaces, such as BSCW, let users work on common documents.

Bob Emmerson is a BYTE correspondent who is based in Eindhoven, The Netherlands. David Greetham is a consultant with Greetham Associates in Turnhout, Belgium. You can contact them at **73252.1364@compuserve.com** *and at* **editors@bix.com**, *respectively.*

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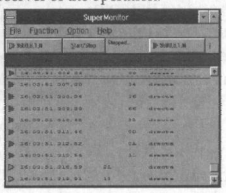

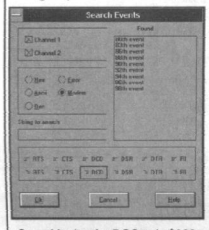

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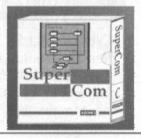

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