that for many polls there is little interest in subsequently identifying callers.

In the poll-format operation of the system, it is important to provide a capability of defining select intervals during which callers may provide data. In one arrangement, with the consummation of a communication interface between a caller and a processor unit, the audio of the television broadcast is keyed from the audio unit AD through the switch **21** (FIG. **1**) for communication to the caller.

With a multiplicity of callers in interface relationship with the processors PR1–PRn as function units, a polling question is stated, for example: "If you favor expanded trade with . . . at the tone press button one; if you do not, press button two".

To control the interval of polling, the command computer terminal CT (FIG. **1**) is actuated to enable the callers timely access to the processors.

At the expiration of a polling interval, the interfaces may be terminated or additional questions may be propounded. In any event, subsequent to the data-gathering phase, the bulk data is supplied to the command computer terminal CT incorporating computing facility to isolate subsets for communication by the broadcast. Accordingly, an effective on-line poll can be conducted with statistical sampling control and prompt display of responses.

As explained above, the arrangement of the function unit (or units) may be variously embodied in a single processor or many processors, depending on various considerations as time sharing, multiplexing, paralleling and so on. The systems as described above embody the components bulked together in one location. However, components of the system could be spaced apart geographically, using dedicated lines or polling techniques. An illustrative embodiment is shown in FIG. **9**.

Call distributors CD1–CDn are at different geographic locations along with associated interface units IA1–IAn and IB1–IBn. Each of the interface units, as unit IA1 is coupled to a central processor **251** as indicated by lines **252**, **254**, **256** and **258**. Each of the lines may take the form of a dedicated telephone line or a polling telephonic coupling.

In the operation of the system of FIG. **9**, the call distributors CD are coupled to a telephonic communication system and accordingly allow the interface units I to provide interface communication between the central processing unit **251** and a multitude of remote terminals T1–Tn as illustrated in FIG. **1**. With data accumulated in the cells, it may be variously down loaded as to a central processing station. Thus, the distributed-component system is capable of executing the various formats as explained above with reference to the illustrative structure.

In view of the above explanation of exemplary systems, it will be appreciated that other embodiments of the present invention may be employed in many applications to accumulate statistical data, process such data, and define subsets of callers of concern. While certain exemplary operations have been stated herein, and certain detailed structures have been disclosed, the appropriate scope hereof is deemed to be in accordance with the claims as set forth below.

What is claimed is:

1. A system to be utilized with a telephone facility for on-line handling of customer data contained in a memory in accordance with a select operating format comprising:

means for receiving called terminal digital data (DNIS) signals automatically provided by said telephone facility to identify said select operating format from a plurality of distinct operating formats and for receiving caller telephone number data from said telephone facility;

an operator terminal for use by a person to communicate through the telephone facility;

interface switching means connected to said receiving means and said operator terminal for receiving incoming calls;

computer means coupled to said interface switching means for connecting an incoming call by a caller to said operator terminal based on a condition, said caller telephone number data being stored in said memory such that said computer means in accordance with said select operating format is capable of accessing said customer data on a selected customer which has a telephone number corresponding to said caller telephone number data automatically provided from said telephone facility, said computer means visually displaying said customer data on a selected customer and said operator terminal capable of providing data entries to said memory; and

said customer data on a selected customer contained in memory is updated by incorporating said data entries into said customer data.

2. A system to be utilized with a telephone facility according to claim **1**, further comprising:

voice generator structure coupled to said interface switching means for prompting callers to enter digital data.

3. A system to be utilized with a telephone facility according to claim **1**, further comprising:

qualification structure coupled to said computer means for testing said customer data.

4. A system to be utilized with a telephone facility according to claim **3**, wherein said qualification structure tests a caller provided PIN number.

5. A system to be utilized with a telephone facility according to claim **1**, wherein said operator terminal provides data entries relating to said caller.

6. A system to be utilized with a telephone facility according to claim **1**, wherein said operator terminal is provided with a display of data relating to said select operating format under control of said called terminal digital data (DNIS) signals.

7. A system to be utilized with a telephone facility according to claim **1**, wherein said customer data on said selected customer includes data specifying a limit on use.

8. A system to be utilized with a telephone facility according to claim **7**, wherein said limit on use specifies a predetermined number of uses.

9. A system to be utilized with a telephone facility according to claim **7**, wherein said limit on use specifies a one time only use.

10. A system to be utilized with a telephone facility according to claim **7**, wherein said limit on use specifies a use relating to a dollar amount.

11. A system to be utilized with a telephone facility according to claim **7**, wherein said customer data on a selected customer includes data based on a specified limit on a number of calls from said caller during specified multiple intervals of time wherein said specified limit is automatically refreshed at the beginning or the end of each of said multiple intervals of time.

12. A system to be utilized with a telephone facility according to claim **7**, wherein said limit on use specifies an extent of access.

13. A system to be utilized with a telephone facility for on-line handling of customer data contained in a memory in accordance with a select operating format comprising:

means for receiving called terminal digital data (DNIS) signals automatically provided by the telephone facility