Titanic, the enormously successful film, calls to mind the assertion that the world’s very first SOS message was sent out by the ship when it foundered in 1912. It would not be too much to say, then, that the disaster marked the beginning of a period of tremendous development in the history of mobile communications. More than eighty years have since passed, and we are entering a mobile computing age. Mobile telephones and PHS are the infrastructure of this age, and they enjoy unprecedented popularity. As of October 1998, a total of 43,460,000 units were in use in Japan; one out of three Japanese has one. The rapid growth in mobile computing systems has been the result of bringing together mobile terminals and wireless communications using mobile phones and PHS, in a remarkable demonstration of the degree and speed of the advances in IT technologies. New products hit the market every few months, and new services come in a constant stream. The development never ceases.

With changes in the structure and environment of industry and society, mobile computing systems benefits are available to all irrespective of age, sex, or regional disparities. Today, being information literate means being capable of dealing with information using mobile computing systems. In this era of rapid change, how we obtain and process information, and then use it to make business decisions, is of vital importance. Mobile computing systems play a key role in this process.

Mobile systems contain an array of elements. These include mobile terminals, mobile telephones/PHS, the services of Internet service and content providers, corporate information-management systems, mobile system middleware designed to enhance operability, and security systems.

Mobile computing systems are also at the forefront of the increasingly popular trend towards front-office sales force automation. Mobile computing systems hold great potential further development, although challenges remain, including the development of more attractive applications, and the introduction of more services that take full advantage of the communications infrastructure.

This special feature covers everything to do with the mobile computing systems of Hitachi, Ltd., including our products as well as the concepts of relevant departments. We hope it will help our readers to both build and understand mobile computing systems.