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THE BATTLE FOR
THE WOMAN VOTER

VISIONS OF TOMORROW

SPECIAL REPORT

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■ Antimicrobial Countertops

WHO: Microban International and countertop maker Cosentino USA

WHY: Until now, antimicrobial agents that fend off bacteria and mold have been limited to cleaning supplies and products made of plastic.

HOW IT WORKS: Cosentino's Silestone is made by compressing natural crystal quartz at the molecular level. In the process, the microbe-resistant agent is bonded to the rock so the countertop has a germ-fighting property when cut, shaped or even chipped.

APPLICATIONS: Antimicrobial countertops make sense because food is prepared on them. Still, makers warn, they're no substitute for cleaning.

HOW MUCH: In April 2005, Home Depot will begin selling Silestone with antimicrobial protection for \$40 to \$95 per square foot.

■ Money-Scanning ATMs

WHO: Bank of America

WHY: Precisely verifying what you've deposited into an ATM has always been tricky. This machine produces an accurate record of the deposit in real time.

HOW IT WORKS: Instead of adding up your money, stuffing it into an envelope and shoving it into the ATM, you slide each check or bill individually into the machine. It scans them, producing a receipt with an accurate

tally of the cash and even color snapshots of the checks. Another feature on the horizon is a Windows-like interface for moving money from one account to another or paying bills.

APPLICATIONS: Every so often, customers key in the wrong amount when they make a deposit at an ATM. The goal here is to avoid disputes and costly errors.

HOW MUCH: Due next year, the ATM service will be free to Bank of America customers.

■ Everywhere Display

WHO: IBM

WHY: Touch-screen kiosks have taken off, but it's not always easy to find space to install them. This invention removes the physical screen so that interactive images can be cast onto almost any surface.

HOW IT WORKS: A wall-mounted projector, paired with a camera, shows images on the floor or wall. The camera tracks people's interactions with the visuals, and the system interprets them the way it would a moving mouse or a tap on a screen.

APPLICATIONS: Retailers could lure shoppers with interactive window displays. Airports might offer visually aided instructions and directions throughout terminals. In a lab or office, collaborators might use it like a high-tech dry-erase board that displays Excel spreadsheets and other interactive material.

HOW MUCH: The display won't be sold in stores and will be priced according to its corporate customers' specifications.

