

At the Theatre of Dreams

It has been several years since AXiS held a major event in Manchester but as this year marks the 30th anniversary of our user group and of the commercial use of VME it seemed very appropriate to return to the City for this year's Spring Conference. Following the successful format of recent years the event was spread over a day and a half with workshops taking place at West Gorton during the afternoon of 19th April and the main Conference day, supported by a comprehensive supplier Showcase, taking place at the home of Manchester United, in the Trafford and Salford Suites at Old Trafford. And the weather was kind to us.

Fujitsu Services hosted the eve of Conference workshops at their Customer Centre at West Gorton, supported by a nostalgic Timeline exhibit spanning the years from 1984 which showed a range of memorabilia, components, pictures, manuals and even a number of previous AMSU and AXiS Conference programmes. It was fascinating to reflect on what changes have occurred in the life of VME so far.



Carlos Fernandez, Informa SA, Spain, travelled furthest to Conference.

A brief report of each workshop is to be found on page 4 in this issue.

Also alongside was a nostalgic tour of the Development Hall under the guidance of George Alt and Ted Lawson. Here a collection of tried and tested architectures remains on display to show the evolution of the machines that have supported VME over many years.

An informal Conference Dinner was held on Tuesday evening at the famous Comedy Store in Manchester, which had been reserved exclusively for AXiS that evening. Many of the delegates who were staying overnight were accommodated at the

Old Trafford Lodge, at the famous home of Lancashire County Cricket Club.

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Dates for the Diary

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Editorial

The 30th birthday of AXiS and VME was celebrated in some style at the Spring Conference in Manchester. For those of us growing up with VME/B the Timeline exhibition in the Customer Centre at West Gorton was very nostalgic. Congratulations to Geoff Peters for arranging such a comprehensive collection of memorabilia. And I'm sure that Dick Norris had much to do with the display of old Conference programmes through the years. It was fun to look back on the shape of Conferences in the days of AMSU. Weren't they big affairs? But then we all seemed to have more time to organise and attend a three-day event. Pressures on us these days can make it difficult to find even one day in the diary for Conference. From that point of view it was particularly pleasing to see so many delegates both at West Gorton and at Old Trafford on the main day.

After the success of the Spring Conference it is disappointing that insufficient interest could be stimulated for the Business Continuity day that was planned for the 16th June at Sungard's Centre near London Airport. The original incentive for the event had come from one of our European members so the location would have helped anyone flying in for the day. Ian Myatt tells me that he hopes to be able to rearrange the event for the autumn.

On a personal note I have asked to step down as Secretary for AXiS. This is part of the process of reducing my commitments, particularly those involving long distance travel. The Committee is now keenly looking for someone to assume the role. Some of the duties can be distributed among Committee members but this could be at the expense of other efforts so new recruits are eagerly sought. If as you read this you feel ready to help then please call me to discuss the role.

Don Folland

Chairman's Column

I hope all of you who attended our Manchester Conference in April enjoyed the event. I know that many of you were able to go on the tour at Manchester United – one delegate said that he had enjoyed it so much it made him want to be a football fan!

A big thank you to all those who completed feedback forms. We were pleased to see that you were pleased both by the venue and the content of the conference. There were some suggestions for improvement that we will be taking into account as we begin planning for next year's event.

Your committee have recently discussed the programme for the coming year. We intend to hold a number of focus group events on a variety of topics and hope to see as many of you as possible at one of these events. We are also looking for a suitable venue for next year's event. If you have any suggestions for venues for any of these meetings or topics to be discussed please let us know.

Can I just conclude by making my customary appeal for more volunteers to join the AXiS committee. If you have any ideas or can spend a little bit of time please let one of the committee know.

I look forward to seeing you again at a future event.

Harold Cloutt



Continued from Front Page

The cricket devotees among us who were lucky enough to have a room with a balcony overlooking the field savoured the pleasure of sitting on the balcony with a suitable glass in hand and dreaming of famous names making a century on the ground below.

The main Conference Day and the associated Vendor Showcase took place at the other famous stadium at Old Trafford. The Trafford and Salford Suites were used for the purpose giving a great view of the hallowed turf for those with a moment to spare between sessions. The exhibition area held 14 stands supporting 11 suppliers. Conference refreshments were served in the area to encourage delegates to visit stands during intervals in the Conference programme. A

particular highlight at lunchtime was the delightful light musical accompaniment by the West Gorton Swing Band under Musical Director, David Messham, with the charming voice of their singer, Lorraine Rothwell.



Immediately after lunch there was a special Conference session, the VME Academy Awards, which provided a chance in this 30th Anniversary year to recognise some 10 specific achievements.

Additionally Don Folland spoke about the AXiS Golden Circle which the Executive Committee decided recently should be a group to which we enrol those dedicated activists from customer or supplier side who have made a substantial contribution to the continued success of AXiS and VME. He pointed out that a number of folk present were displaying already the special gold brooch. On behalf of AXiS he was delighted to call to Golden Circle membership, Neil

Stevenson, John Popplewell, Margaret Leigh and Derek Harrison and present them with their brooch.

A report of the main Conference programme and a list of the VME Academy Award winners is to be found below.

Finally for the football enthusiasts a tour of the stadium was arranged. This proved very popular. For those who were unable to take the tour here are a few highlights. The Old Trafford stadium currently seats 68,000 but when the corner of the north stand is extended it will become the biggest stadium in the country until the completion of the new Wembley. The tour led visitors in front of the director's box where you could clearly see the

four seats owned by Sir Bobby Charlton, currently a director of the club. The tour visited the new dug-outs that were constructed in the first season of Alex Ferguson's time at United and then went through to the players' lounge where the International honours board displayed all the famous names of United's past and

present and then on to the players dressing room. Visitors were regaled with anecdotes around players, their foibles and superstitions and the unusual habits of Eric Cantona in the dressing room! Finally the tour then led to the new players' tunnel and out for a superb view of the pitch from the Stretford End.

As usual a big thankyou to the Conference planners under the sterling leadership of Harold Cloutt for arranging this celebratory event and thanks also to Fujitsu Services through Geoff Peters for the special afternoon at West Gorton. Lets hope that their move from West Gorton goes smoothly.



Spring Conference Report

Tuesday: 19th April

Workshop 1: Everything you wanted to know about VME Communications but were afraid to ask

Derek Harrison, Fujitsu Services, led this workshop. Derek's enthusiasm for the subject was abundantly clear and his ability to demonstrate in a practical way some of the points made the subject much easier to understand than reading the slides. Despite a breakneck delivery the first iteration of this workshop overran its schedule, but popular opinion was that it should run to completion.

Workshop 2: IT Service Management and BS15000 standard

John Groom, whose first exposure to VME/B as a user was in 1976, gave a succinct presentation geared to the needs of the participants of each workshop. He reviewed the key challenges for effective IT Service Management discussing both IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) which focuses on best practice and the latest standard, BS15000. The latter is necessary if an organisation seeks certification for Service Management.

Workshop 3: The VME Masterclass

As last year Margaret Leigh, and John Poplewell, Fujitsu Services led this workshop. The VME Masterclass is very popular. This year it reflected the theme of VME Past, Present and Future. The Past touched upon the Continuous improvement program, the Present discussed the pros and cons of database reorganisations which may arise because users are staying longer on VME. Right sizing was also discussed - is MIPS a sole indicator of system performance and can you expect seamless power transition between architectures. For the future there was a look at plans for OpenVME 7 - reflecting feedback from last year's AXiS survey, and more on HostTalk and superNOVA - the latter being the next iteration of Series 39 architecture.

Wednesday 20th April

Keynote Address: VME Through the Ages

After a warm welcome from Harold Clout, AXiS Chairman, the day got off to an exhilarating start with a Keynote address from Professor Brian Warboys, currently Professor Emeritus of Software Engineering at Manchester University. Brian considered VME through the ages and clearly enjoyed the opportunity to recall the very early days from inception in 1969, through the first commercial operations in 1975 and on to consider some aspects of the future. He identified some of the issues practical and political that had influenced the design, making VME/B rather than VME/K the ultimate choice.

Fujitsu Strategy and Vision

Neil Stevenson, Director, Core Services Division, Fujitsu Services, then took centre stage for the regular vision of the company's VME strategy and roadmap. Neil has now enjoyed 8 years as the self-styled guardian of VME. He expressed appreciation to users and third party suppliers alike who have contributed to the continued success of the operating system. With a glimpse into the crystal ball how well can we predict the Datacentre of 2020? Considering how some predictions in the past have fallen so far short perhaps the best thing to be said is that it will be influenced by something we have not thought about so far.

VME Product Update 2005

A must-attend session for every delegate is the annual update on VME products, delivered again by John Poplewell. His opening remarks were to say how much an honour and privilege it was to speak at the Theatre of Dreams! He started by reviewing the feedback from last year's AXiS survey of requirements for OpenVME7, and presented a list of the items that have been selected for inclusion. He also talked about Tape Virtualisation, SoftCAFS (a *superNOVA* product delivered early), the latest on *HostTalk*, and gave an overview and

status report on *superNOVA* which will now be both Windows and Linux based.

A VME User's Perspective

Ed Wilson, formerly Chief Architect, Inland Revenue, made a welcome return to the AXiS Conference platform with an inspiring and frequently amusing reflection of life with VME from his early involvement with one of the first operational VME/B systems, touching upon Project Heineken to validate the parts that others cannot reach, and providing a critical appreciation of systems such as Unix and Windows that at Inland Revenue have not delivered the 100% availability that has been typical for Revenue's VME Systems. In the MAD world of Mergers, Acquisitions and Divestitures loose coupling is a good idea to achieve the necessary flexibility but it may be costly. Ed reflected on several conundrums; if you design and build top down it takes too long to deliver; from the bottom up you may never finish, so should it be from the middle outwards? If your supplier is big enough your business may count for little in their bottom line; if your supplier is too small they may not survive long enough for your needs. Ed quoted

a Gartner prediction that in 5 years time 50% of today's suppliers will no longer exist.

Primergy - Servers and Solutions overview

Richard Flanders, Server Business Development Manager at Fujitsu-Siemens, was commended for delivering his presentation precisely in the 10 minutes allocated. It was rather a marketing piece to present PRIMERGY-based solutions, for instance to support SAP business applications.

WebSphere and Integration

Following the VME Academy Awards came a presentation from IBM, which must be a first for an AXiS event. Andy Heys, Software Architect, IBM UK Software Solutions, introduced the IBM approach to integration using the WebSphere product family, showing how VME application domains can be integrated into the WebSphere platform and so integrate with other applications. A separate article on Websphere is included in this Newsletter.

Copies of all the presentations can be accessed or downloaded in PDF format from the AXiS web site: <http://www.axis.org.uk/springconf051.htm>.

Spring Conference VME Academy Awards

To mark the 30th birthday of VME and AXiS the VME Academy Awards were introduced with the winners being announced at the AXiS Spring Conference in Manchester on 20th April 2005. For several of the categories the winners were chosen following public nomination via the AXiS web site.

At the Conference Professor Brian Warboys presented the following awards, which comprised appropriate hardware components from redundant VME systems, splendidly mounted and framed:

VME User who travelled the furthest distance to attend the 30th Anniversary Conference

Carlos Fernandez, Informa SA, Spain

The award was a hard disk drive removed from a redundant VME system

Favourite or most popular machine supporting VME

Trimetra (Presented to Neil Stevenson on behalf of Fujitsu Services)

The award was a G366 Macrolan Coupler from a Series 39 SX 1990

Most significant advance in technology associated with VME

CAFS (Presented to George Alt on behalf of Fujitsu Services)

The award was a G275 CAFS3 Coupler SMARTarray 1994

Best Third Party VME Application

FASTDUMP (Presented to Gresham Computer Services Ltd)

The award was an H518 Remote Concentrator Interface Board RDC 1995

Longest running user of VME

MOD (Presented to Paul Burkenshaw)

The award was a G274 SMARTfibre Coupler SMARTarray 1994

Most outstanding use of VME

BACS (now Voca)

The award was an H574 CAFS4 Coupler SMARTarray 1998

Most helpful VME support technician at Fujitsu Services

Bob Cheetham

The award was a hard disk drive removed from a redundant VME system

Most helpful VME support technician at a Customer site

Steve Purvor, Lancashire County Council

The award was a hard disk drive removed from a redundant VME system

Most valuable contribution to VME by a user

Ed Wilson, Inland Revenue

The award was a hard disk drive removed from a redundant VME system

Most significant contribution to the development of VME

Professor Brian Warboys (presented by Harold Cloutt, AXIS Chairman)

The award was an H553 Support System Daughter Board Series 39 SX 1990

A further, unscripted, award was made to Don Folland for his dedicated contribution and service to AXIS. This award was also a hard disk drive removed from a redundant VME system.

Spring Conference Showcase

The following stands were established in the Exhibition area:



Fujitsu Services

Fujitsu Services designs, builds and operates IT systems and services for customers in the financial services, telecom, retail, utilities and government markets. Its core strength is the delivery of IT infrastructure management and outsourcing across desktop, networking and data centre environments, together with a full range of related services, from infrastructure consulting through integration and deployment.

Fujitsu and Siemens combined their strengths in 1999 to make Fujitsu Siemens Computers the largest IT manufacturer in Europe, offering one of the world's most complete IT product and solution portfolios. The company's strategic direction is focused on Mobility and Business Critical Computing. The latter harnesses the core competencies of the

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company and is concentrated on building secure, reliable and scalable IT infrastructures. Fujitsu Siemens also address the ever-increasing demand for advanced solutions that support the mobility of users with anytime access to Internet services and applications, independent of location and device.



EMC Corporation

EMC helps enterprises of all sizes manage their growing volumes of information, from creation to disposal, according to its changing value to the business through information lifecycle management (ILM) strategies. EMC information infrastructure solutions are at the heart of this mission, helping organisations manage, use, protect, and share their information assets more efficiently and cost-effectively. These solutions integrate networked storage technologies, storage systems, software and services.



Gresham Computing plc

Gresham is a long standing member of AXiS and a regular contributor at our Conferences and Exhibitions. The company develops and implements software solutions for banking, integration and storage, delivering products into financial services, manufacturing, healthcare, utilities, telecommunications and public services. Its Fastdump product was voted by users on the AXiS web site as the best third party application running on VME.



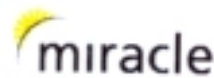
Hopewiser

Since 1982 Hopewiser has provided Address Management Software based around the 27 million addresses contained on the UK Postcode Address File (PAF). The company now designs and supplies a suite of name and address management software to leading organisations world-wide on a range of computer hardware - from Mainframe to Mid range including Unix and Linux to PC systems - meeting international, regional and local addressing needs. Their ATLAS address processing suite contains 8 individual components with unique functionalities which combine to enable quick, accurate address Capture, Deduplication, Batch and interactive address processing and convert multiple address files into standardised format. Their Foreign Addresser facilitates the preparation and mailing of international address files.



Integrated Document Solutions

IDS is a leading international provider of document and output management solutions. Whatever the business environment, local authority, utility, FM operation or financial institution, IDS has the knowledge and experience to help solve document production problems, big or small. It could be to migrate an open or closed VME network from Oslan to TCP/IP, or simply prepare to stock up on print bands or other consumables.



Miracle GA

Miracle is a fast growing group of software companies providing business critical solutions in a number of diverse markets and offering a range of generic IT solutions and services as well as some very specific niche deliverables:

- ❖ VME hosting services, Migration and Training
- ❖ Navision development and implementation
- ❖ Payroll and HR Solutions
- ❖ ERP, based on Fujitsu GLOVI A technology
- ❖ IT Infrastructure Services
- ❖ Imaging and Archiving Solutions
- ❖ Housing Association Systems

A fully staffed Data Centre can offer a 24X7 sophisticated VME mainframe hosting service.



Network Designers Limited

A frequent participant at AXiS events NDL, with their offices in Yorkshire and Oxfordshire, has been providing connectivity and integration software solutions for over two decades, having started as a provider of terminal emulation to the ICL user community. In the past year NDL has become a market leader in back-office integration, irrespective of the systems in place, specialising in e-Government and CRM in the public sector.

Seagull Software

Seagull Software's LegaSuite® helps organisations abstract and service-enable existing ICL application business logic and data for standards-based integration into next generation architectures, including new J2EE and .NET applications, enterprise portals, composite applications, service-oriented architecture and Web services. ICL application functions can be exposed as industry standard programmatic interfaces including XML, J2EE, .NET, HTML and SOAP, enabling organisations to take advantage of Web-era technologies. LegaSuite works stand-alone, or accelerates

legacy integration to other enterprise architecture environments including WebSphere, WebLogic, BizTalk Server and EAI products such as SeeBeyond, TIBCO and webMethods.



Sungard Availability Services

Sungard Availability Services has pioneered information availability and business continuity since 1978, developing over the years a continuum of proactive, reactive and interactive information availability solutions comprising business continuity, disaster recovery and high availability/managed services. They have some 10,000 customers worldwide across a broad spectrum of business sector and size.



StorageTek

StorageTek has a 35-year tradition of innovation in storage technologies. The company's information lifecycle management strategy and implementation helps customers

solve their storage challenges. It offers the appropriate products and services to help customers manage exploding amounts of data; increase the productivity of customers' primary storage assets, provide backup and recovery systems that are reliable, less labour intensive and simpler to use, and designs deep archive and compliance architectures that keep customers in business while complying with new regulations and laws that mandate data retention.



Transoft

Transoft provides specialist tools and expertise to enable organisations to evolve new IT solutions from existing applications, so delivering improved business processes faster at reduced risk and cost. Transoft evolutionary solutions enable organisations to utilise the latest technologies as part of the development lifecycle of existing applications. A Transoft Pathfinder Project would give an organisation a comprehensive understanding of current software assets and future business requirements to assist with the modernisation, integration or migration of existing ICL applications.

Introducing WebSphere

Extending OpenVME TP Applications with WebSphere® Business Integration Adapter for DTS Protocol

An On Demand business is an enterprise whose business processes — integrated end-to-end across the company and with key partners, suppliers, and customers — can respond with speed to any customer demand, market opportunity, or external threat.

It's about delivering business flexibility by integrating data, applications, processes and people across and beyond your company, giving you the power to leverage existing IT

investments while quickly adapting to changing business conditions.

IBM offers an integrated portfolio of offerings supported by a standards based service oriented infrastructure. The IBM WebSphere® portfolio, augmented with key offerings from other IBM software brands, provides a complete range of integration solutions to move you closer to on demand, regardless of your size, industry, or integration challenge.

A fundamental part of this WebSphere® family is the WebSphere® Business Integration

Message Broker. The Broker transforms and enriches in-flight information to provide a level of intermediation between applications that use different message structures and formats. It distributes real-time information from disparate sources of information through a network of access points or a centralised broker, and provides a powerful new means to unify organisations. It integrates with databases to perform message logging, data merge, and database update functions and simplifies the integration of existing applications with web services.

To connect the broker to back end application is via adapters, one of which is the DTS adapter. The adapter enables bi-directional, asynchronous data exchange with Fujitsu mainframe applications.

This adapter connects to the Fujitsu HostTalk VME Connector for the Java™ Platform V2.0.001, a component of the Fujitsu HostTalk product suite and provides the ability to access

OpenVME TP applications and incorporate them in solutions built upon Java technology.

The DTS Protocol communicates via TCP/IP with VME systems. This adapter is metadata-driven and supports bi-directional messaging (both request processing and event notification).

WebSphere® Business Integration Adapters allow you to quickly and easily create integrated processes that exchange information between ERP, HR, CRM and supply chain systems. These pre-built, stand-alone solutions offer you simpler implementation and configuration, greater interoperability, system flexibility and change protection. The adapters help protect your investment in VME technology whilst at the same time allowing business agility, speed your time to market and hone your competitive edge.

To learn more about where this solution has been successfully implemented in a live environment please contact Lee Armstrong at leearms@uk.ibm.com.

Fujitsu News

Solving customer transfer problems for utilities

Fujitsu Services is launching the first managed sales and contract control system for the utilities sector. It will give utilities full control of the sales and contract management process to combat problems such as mis-selling, erroneous transfers and un-billable contracts.

This service comes about through a newly formed relationship with software company, Utility Retail Systems. The two companies will offer end-to-end processing of customer and contract details from the point of initial customer contact through to account creation. The system validates all of the information that is entered and ensures that the sales process adheres to agreed codes of practice and that the customer is offered the correct tariff and can be billed without delay. This means that direct sales and customer transfers

can be dealt with efficiently and ethically, preventing damage to corporate reputation and consumer confidence.

Profits up and increased order book

At the beginning of June Fujitsu Services marked the end of another good year, announcing its financial results for 2004/05. The company made an operating profit before exceptional items of £73.8 million and a profit before tax of £85.0 million in the year ended 31 March 2005, an increase of 69% from 2003/04. And the company's order book has grown to £6.2 billion which augurs well for next year.

2004/05 proved an excellent year for Fujitsu Services with a total revenue of £1,986.1 million, an increase of 14.5% from 2003/04. Good performance and growth in UK Government business plus a significant upturn

in commercial sector new business, for example in retail and financial services, have all contributed to the company's growth.

A Silver for Fujitsu

In April Fujitsu was awarded the Management Consultancies Association Silver award in the category of Technology Exploitation, for its role in the Polar Challenge, a 320-mile team race in the unforgiving conditions of the Arctic.

With only five weeks before the start of the race, Fujitsu devised a solution based on a Motorola satellite phone running on the Iridium satellite network. The platform selected was Fujitsu-Siemens' Loox 610 PDA, with extended life battery, using Microsoft 2003 Windows Mobile. A unique graphical interface was developed to improve usability and navigability when the teams were physically frozen and therefore less agile.

For those who missed the news the Polar Challenge Team Hardware.com, a company that specialises in new & refurbished Cisco hardware and network accessories, won this year.



The Innovation in IT Award for Fujitsu Services

Also in April Fujitsu Services was awarded "The Innovation in IT Award" for its STAR Ticket Issuing System, in recognition of the success in helping to bring Rail Retailing into the 21st Century.

STAR is a Service Offering that Fujitsu developed specifically for the UK Rail segment of the Travel Vertical. It brings together Fujitsu's extensive expertise in both Rail and Retail, combining services such as RJIS with GlobalSTORE and TeamPoS offerings. Fujitsu is helping train companies to learn from the experience of high street retailers in order to help them enhance their ticket retailing capability and improve levels of customer service.

This innovative approach has been enthusiastically accepted by the market and to date seven train operating companies have selected STAR as their preferred rail retail solution. 2005 will see the installation of Fujitsu's innovative solution at over 1000 ticket office windows across the length and breadth of the UK.

From the Archives

The Spring Conference of 1985 was held at Exeter University under the auspices of the Large Systems User Group. Our Chairman then was Roger Mackenzie. This Conference was a joint event with the Central and Southern User Groups, since in those days the ICL Computer User Association included a number of regional groups as well as specialist groups like LSUG, the Scientific User Group and the Data Management User Group.

Harry Barnes, who was introduced as a talented jazz musician who also worked for Dorset County Council and knew a thing or two about Integrated Digital Networks, presented the first session of Conference that year. Shortly after came a presentation by Dr Geoff Pickering who introduced the concept of Open Systems with of course particular reference to OSI. Folk may still recall the handy phrase for remembering the seven layers of the OSI model: Poor Dear Nelly Trout She has Passed Away (Protocol, Delivery, Network, Transport, Session, Presentation, Application).

A key announcement at this Conference was the birth of the ICL Series 39. A technical annex to the June 1985 Newsletter provides an introduction to Series 39 and 2900 Model 39 with reference also to Macrolan, Oslan, FDS300, FDS2500, new tapedecks providing 310, 470 and 780 Kb/sec operation in GCR mode, and a new fast printer, the LP2000. As a reminder VME was at SV211, issued at the beginning of 1985 and considered a significant milestone in the development of VME.

CAFS

AXiS News recently received an email from Guy Haworth, who was marketing manager for CAFS during the 80's. He was looking for good copies of two ICLCUA CAFS Reports that could be scanned to create searchable text-and-graphics in Acrobat.

The first port of call was Hamish Carmichael who had worked with Guy and subsequently had written a history of ICL. We had hoped that there were still copies of that history to give to guests at the recent Spring Conference. Hamish however had passed all of his papers to the Science Museum and no longer had copies of his history.

Guy eventually found copies of the reports which he has made generally accessible from his website at the University of Reading where he is currently teaching Computer Science.

These reports which are 35 and 40Mb each can be accessed at:

<http://www.cs.reading.ac.uk/people/G.Haworth.htm?publications>

Editor's Note: It is a nice coincidence that CAFS was recognised in the recent VME Academy Awards as the most significant advance in technology associated with VME.

Tailpiece

To show the impact of today's technology here is an extract from a child's version of the Lord's Prayer:

"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us some e-mail..."

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For further detail contact the Editor (see page 2)