

Autumn 2002

Volume 8 Number 3

AXiS

News

New Focus Group Established

It is probably fair to say that since AMSU changed its name to AXiS there had not been any occasion for the group to seek to hold formal meetings with ICL over problems with products or services. Fujitsu Services has recently presented some members with a cause to seek to work together which is somewhat reminiscent of the early days of VME. The cause, the Fujitsu Services bulletins in July announcing withdrawal of support for the FDS range of disk systems and the ESS Solid State disk system at the end of December 2002 as well as for all models of the Series 39 DX range and for OpenVME for these products at the end of June 2003.

As a result of approaches to our Chairman made by several AXiS members affected by and concerned about withdrawal of support the AXiS Executive Committee agreed to set up a Focus Group to provide a forum for assessing the impact and potential options for resolution of any difficulties anticipated by customers.

On 10th September Fujitsu Services at West Gorton kindly hosted a meeting, which is regarded as the inaugural meeting of the Fujitsu Services Support Group. Harold Cloutt, AXiS Chairman, chaired this meeting in the absence of Ian Myatt who was unwell. Ian will co-ordinate future activities for the Focus Group. He can be contacted by e-mail. (address page 2)

Steve Clarke, Fujitsu Services VME Business Marketing Manager, outlined in a well balanced presentation the rationale for the Fujitsu Services decision to withdraw support for the particular hardware and software systems. Whilst he was anxious not to get into detailed discussion on individual cases or specific contractual arrangements at this meeting he was willing to set up separate meetings to explore individual customer issues.

Fujitsu Services appears to have fallen out of step with the rest of the IT industry in supporting ageing hardware and software systems. Historically ICL had established policies for support commitments but had often been able to maintain a level of support for

customers beyond the declared lifetime of a product. This is no longer a practical proposition especially since it is not possible to repair or replace some failing components in these older systems.

Some electromechanical devices, such as fans, may actually deteriorate on the shelf even before use. Connectors wear quickly if moved or disturbed regularly. Optical connectors are usually fine if never disturbed. Silicon chips have a finite life.

Many of these systems require fault diagnosis by a team of experts at West Gorton. This team is fast reaching normal retirement age and the particular expertise cannot be replaced.

Many faulty components can no longer be repaired because necessary spares depend on 3rd party repair routes which themselves have closed or are closing.

Can exceptions be made?

In the past customers have expected to be able to negotiate exceptions and if it were practical now Fujitsu Services would certainly have allowed this. Indeed withdrawal of support might not have been announced. However the decision is very much a technical one and neither a business nor marketing decision. Business units within Fujitsu Services are even feeling the impact internally. The Series 39 support infrastructure is being dismantled and the associated hardware and software support staff are being redeployed.

Continued on page

In this Issue

News from Web-based Services Group
Outline Agenda for Autumn Conference
Fujitsu News
News on VME Training
Freedom of Information Act Compliance

Executive Committee

Chairman

Harold Cloutt

Tel: 01424 733770

Email: harold.cloutt@axis.org.uk

Secretary/Newsletter Editor

Don Folland

Tel 01603 279402 Fax 0870 0524293

Email dfolland@axis.org.uk

Treasurer & Membership Secretary

Harry Barnes

Tel 01305 208705 Fax 01305 834456

Email harry.barnes@axis.org.uk

Vice Chairman/Trimetra

Ian Myatt

Tel: 01656 305619

Email: ian.myatt@axis.org.uk

Cross Platform Group

Harold Cloutt

(See above)

Fujitsu Liaison

Steve Clarke

Email: Steve.Clarke@services.fujitsu.com

TeamWare Liaison

Ken Chilton

Email: ken.chilton.@teamware.co.uk

Committee Members

Emma Campbell, Email: emma.campbell@axis.org.uk

Alan Frost, Email: alan.frost@axis.org.uk

AXiS News : PO Box 384, Buxton, Norwich, NR10 5RS

Dates for the Diary 2002

6/7th Nov

Autumn Conference, Bletchley Park

Watch the Events page on the AXiS web site: <http://www.axis.org.uk>

**Get the latest news
about AXiS from our
very own Web site:**

**Visit at:
<http://www.axis.org.uk>**

Editorial

It has been very busy on my Secretary's desk this summer - perhaps an indication of the usefulness of AXiS to its members? The announcements from Fujitsu about withdrawal of support in several areas has stirred interest from several members as reported elsewhere in this issue. It is now that I have been very thankful to have e-mail capability to assist with liaison between members concerned, Fujitsu, and AXiS Executive Committee members. This facilitated setting up the meeting at short notice. It would have been more laborious, time-consuming and costly using the telephone.

At the same time there has been an amount of electronic correspondence to focus on arrangements for the Autumn Conference at Bletchley Park. This is shaping up very well and it is great news that Richard Christou, Fujitsu Services Chief Executive, has agreed to deliver the keynote presentation to open the main event on Thursday 7th November 2002.

I have to admit that having been brought up on a diet of PLAN, George 2 and George 3 I am really looking forward to a special demonstration of George 3 running on a PC to be arranged by David Holdsworth of Leeds University towards the end of the afternoon of 6th November. Considering all that Bletchley Park means in terms of computing history it is very appropriate that George 3 should make an appearance.

It is hoped to launch at the Conference a special group for past members of AXiS (AMSU, LSUG, 2900 User Group) and ICL. At present the group has been labelled "Golden Circle". It is proposed that it provides an opportunity for past members to meet old friends and perhaps have a presentation on an IT issue which keeps members updated on current trends in IT.

Don Folland

Continued from Front Page

What are the options for customers?

As a result of discussions that have already taken place with some individual customers a set of options have been identified:

- i) migrate to alternative environments
- ii) merge operations with an organisation having a similar business and operational environment which is also geographically convenient
- iii) full or partial outsourcing of operation
- iv) share peripherals with other systems, eg Shared Disk and Tape Library
- v) replace with modern technologies, most VME peripherals are now industry standard
- vi) risk running without hardware or software support.

Steve Clarke used the video clip of Richard Christou to reiterate the Fujitsu Services commitment to VME until at least 2010 and he reminded the meeting of the

AXiS News

Chairman's Column

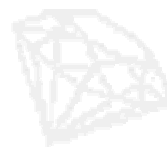
It has been quite an eventful summer for AXiS. Following the announcements at our Spring Meeting, Fujitsu have announced the withdrawal of support for a number of 'older' hardware items. A large number of you were concerned about this and consequently a Focus group was set up to consider this issue. A meeting was held in West Gorton on 10th September at which the reasons for the decisions were explained. A number of important questions were raised. A full report of this meeting is available in the member's area of the web site. If you still have concerns please let one of the Committee know.

Planning is well advanced for our Autumn event at Bletchley Park on November 6th and 7th - please check that you have this event in your diary. As we stated in the last AXiS news the first day will consist of a number of workshop sessions with the main meeting on the second day.

There will be a small exhibition at this event and Fujitsu Services have confirmed that there will be a miniNova in the exhibition area. Please check the AXiS web site for details of the programme. A tour of this historic site will be available.

You should be receiving initial details of this event in the next few days. Please book early.

Harold Clouff



OpenVME Roadmap drawing attention to the miniNOVA to be introduced later this year to assist smaller businesses to move forward. This system is rated from 0.1 to 7.5 Mips. He mentioned that AXiS members should be able to touch and feel a miniNOVA at the AXiS Autumn event at Bletchley Park (6/7th November).

With the eventual arrival of SuperNOVA (2004) providing for VME to run on Windows, such that VME will handle applications whilst Windows drives peripherals, there is the real prospect of a platform independent VME.

Several questions from the audience focused on particular aspects of support. A full report of the meeting can be found in the Members' area of the AXiS web site:

(<http://www.axis.org.uk/members/fsfgmeeting.doc>) or obtained from the Secretary:
(e-mail: dfolland@axis.org.uk)

Focus Groups

Web-based Services Focus Group

As reported in the last issue of AXiS News this Focus Group has been established and has its own presence on the World Wide Web thanks to Teamware. It was anticipated that the Group's activity would be largely online but it is planned that the Group will hold a workshop on Wednesday afternoon (6th November 2002) at Bletchley Park as part of the Autumn Conference.

The workshop will be led by Stuart Hillston, Chief Technical Officer, InterForum. Suggestions from the Group for discussion include :

General Design: Thoughts on the use of Flash technology. Should this be avoided at all costs to maximise site reach? or is it OK to use Flash to generate content like ads? Are designers still using 800 * 600 as the standard for the resolution of web pages? What advice have people got on the use of fonts - colours, size etc?

Customising the User Experience : Does anyone have any good tips on how to do this? Is it simply a matter of remembering the user's name using a cookie when they return to your site? or can more be done?

Management: What are the best tools for analysing website usage for an IIS based site.

If you have further suggestions please get in touch with Don Folland: (dfolland@axis.org.uk)

Revised Standard for Web Site and Web Page Engineering approved

In September IEEE approved a revision of IEEE Std 2001 which extends the standard first published in 1999 based on recommendations since it was developed, addressing 'site wide' issues as well as 'managed' web sites (as opposed to just Intranet and Extranet sites). These can serve to improve the effectiveness of Web pages for users, Web page developers, and the value of the Web in corporate and organisational applications. This standard is focused on managed web sites, Intranet (within an organisation) and Extranet (between a group of collaborating organisations).

The World Wide Web is expanding and its value is increasing as a method for locating and delivering information. This creates a significant engineering challenge. Locating applicable information requires that indexing information be incorporated into Web page development. Once an applicable page has been located, essential information may not be present,

resulting in user frustration and a failure of the Web application to meet its purpose.

Web page engineering often is done with little consideration for the immediate or ongoing implications of Web site design or implementation. Some sites reflect "state of the art" delivery that can only be accessed with the most recent tools. This may be inconsistent with the business objectives for that site. Some sites will outlive their usefulness, occupying valuable resources (particularly as these are incorporated into organisational indexes, and delivered as prospective "query returns" by indexing and search services). Poor Web page engineering will result in lost productivity and user frustration, and may even lead to a legal liability.

There may be no clear prediction of when a specific Web site will be obsolete. There is a legitimate engineering concern that this life span may be significantly underestimated or disregarded entirely in many Web site designs. Vendor products--past and future versions, format preferences, or selection of implementation languages may require future re-engineering as vendors and products fade. Corporate Web sites may not need to live beyond the life of the corporation, however, public sector and other institutional sites may well span centuries. A significant portion of the content of these sites may not require updating, except in cases of short-sighted design.

The recommended practices and requirements set out in the IEEE standard are aimed to reduce the risks associated with Web page investments. Further revision of this standard is expected, partially to reflect changes in the Web environment, but also to reflect increased understanding of "recommended practices" in Web page engineering. There is a popular awareness of "Web years," characterised by rapid advances in the platform technology for clients and servers. There is a potentially expensive, misinformed conclusion that might be drawn from this, which is that Web pages (and more directly, information content and services delivery) either are, or should, move forward at this same rate. Some of today's Web pages will warrant long-term retention; and within the context of business operations (which is the core of managed sites) re-engineering of last year's Web pages is an investment that requires justification. The value of Web-based operations is the delivery of the right information and services to the right persons at the right time with the least amount of effort. Success in Web-based operations is based more on engineering design in response to an understanding of the target-user community and information, than it is on the rapidly evolving technology for Web platforms.

For more information: <http://standards.ieee.org>

AUTUMN CONFERENCE

THE VME ENIGMA



Bletchley Park

Thursday 7th November, 10 am

Preliminary Agenda

Welcome from Harold Clouff, AXiS Chairman

Keynote address: Richard Christou, Chief Executive, Fujitsu Services

VME Strategy Update: Steve Clarke, VME Business Development Manager

The NOVA Experience: Customer Experiences

Open VME – The Future: John Popplewell, Technical Architect

(Note: the Advanced Release Description of OpenVME5 is now available at

<http://www.vmesupport.net/index.html>)

Afternoon stream sessions commence at 2 pm

Stream 1

Web-based Services

Virtual teams in the business environment

Getting corporate value from Mobile Technology

Stream 2

Operating Systems

OpenVME futures

Storage futures

A guided Tour of Station X is available from 3.30 pm

The exhibition area will host a number of stands demonstrating the latest technologies, capabilities and applications from a range of companies operating in the VME environment. A working *Trimetra miniNOVA* will also be available for anyone that wants to “kick the tyres”. *miniNOVA* is the new entry-level VME server due for General Release at the end of November.

There will also be opportunities to discuss any pertinent issues you may have with Fujitsu Services management during the course of the day on an individual basis.

Wednesday 6th November

During the afternoon preceding the main conference there will be a number of workshop sessions for interactive exploration of particular topics such as Web site design. For the nostalgic there will be a demonstration of George 3 running on a PC! During this afternoon it is hoped that the *miniNOVA* will be up and running.

An informal Dinner is planned for the evening of 6th November



Trimetra miniNOVA consists of a hardware, software, transition and support package. Physically it is a single 48" high, 19" rack mounting cabinet system containing CPU, Store, Discs, CAFs, TMC and single DLT tape in an office environment. It runs OVME4.0

Optional

- 2nd DLT tape drive
- External tapes
- PCI Card [Ethernet or SCSI]

Fujitsu News

Fujitsu achieves Gold Certification from Cisco Systems

In July Fujitsu Services achieved Gold Certification from Cisco Systems, Inc. The Cisco partner certification program provides Fujitsu with the resources to develop its expertise in selling, implementing and supporting Cisco network solutions in the areas of IP telephony, Wireless LAN and Network Management. Gold Certification status acknowledges the highest Cisco standard for network expertise and support capabilities. Customers typically specify Cisco network technology to solve critical business problems and to implement successful Internet business strategies.

The Cisco Partner Certification Program ensures the consistent delivery of industry-leading support by maintaining rigorous standards for network expertise and support capabilities.

Cisco certified partners benefit from a listing on the Cisco Partner Locator, making it easy for potential customers to find them; access to password protected Cisco Web sites, which have training information, marketing and sales tools as well as event and seminar information; and increased access to Cisco technical support teams and product information.

Fujitsu Support Modernising Parliament for the Electronic Age

In August Fujitsu Services sponsored an exhibition aimed at demonstrating the benefit of information technology to Members of Parliament. The exhibition was launched by Stephen Timms, the recently appointed e-Commerce Minister.

"Modernising Parliament for the Electronic Age" was organised and hosted by InterForum, a not-for-profit organisation that helps British businesses to trade electronically, and was supported by industry leaders such as Fujitsu, Hewlett-Packard, BT, Cisco Systems and IBM, with additional support from the Office of the E-Envoy and the DTI.

By exploring the technology currently being used in Parliament and Government, the exhibition was designed to help educate Members of Parliament and Peers to the opportunities that the Internet now provides to improve working practices and enhance communications within Government, with constituents and with members of the public. In addition, the exhibition set a vision of how technological developments could help to improve Parliamentary working practices to meet the needs of the electronic age.

Derek Hardman, Corporate Marketing Director for Fujitsu Services, said, "The UK Government has set some very challenging targets for trading electronically, both internally and for the country as a whole. This exhibition raised the awareness of legislators and will provide a platform for further discussions, especially regarding their own use of technology in helping meet the Governments targets"

Fujitsu call centre model finalist in National Business Awards 2002

Fujitsu Services has been selected as a finalist in the National Business Awards 2002, sponsored by Orange. These awards inaugurated this year recognise and reward excellence, best practice and innovation across the UK business community. The awards are supported by a range of organisations such as Investors in People, The Work Foundation and the Institute of Customer Service.

Fujitsu Services has been nominated in the Customer Focus Award category for its call centre Sense and Respond model that puts the customer at the heart of its business, radically changing the role of call centre agents. Almost 1,900 nominations were received for the National Business Awards 2002 and twenty-three

business sectors are represented by the finalists. Fujitsu is the only IT company that is a finalist in the Customer Focus Award.

The National Business Awards 2002 winners will be announced on Tuesday, October 29th at an awards ceremony that will be filmed by Sky News.

The judges for The National Business Awards will be looking for evidence of three key guiding principles in all 21 categories: commercial success, innovation in performance improvement and ethics in respect of legislation, regulation, the environment and the rights of all stakeholders. Supported by organisations ranging from Investors in People, the Work Foundation through to the Chartered Institute of Marketing and the Institute of Customer Service, the National Business Awards will be the most visible and sought after endorsement of corporate and individual achievement in the UK. The National Business Awards are already attracting intense interest reflecting the fact that the programme is the first of its kind to cater to all business sector categories and organisations of all sizes, from the achievements of new ventures to FTSE100s.

For further information visit:
www.thenationalbusinessawards.com



VME TRAINING NEWS

Miracle GA have acquired the IPR of Beaumont's VME training portfolio from KnowledgePool and at the same time have appointed KnowledgePool as a reseller of its VME training courses.

It is Miracle's intention to maintain ICL's (now Fujitsu Services) long tradition of world-class VME training courses:

- We will continue to run the existing range of training courses.
- We will use the existing team of experienced lecturers. With that in mind we are particularly pleased to announce that we have acquired the services of senior lecturer Chris (Chad) Hadfield.
- You can still book your courses through KnowledgePool or directly from Miracle GA on **0151-9442244**. (Please ask for **Julie Bush**).

- We will continue to run courses at customer sites and from our newly refurbished Training Centre in Aintree (where Miracle has its VME Data Centre).
- In the New Year we will also be offering courses from Miracle GA's support centre in Reading.

We believe that this acquisition further solidifies Miracle's position in the VME community.

- Facilities Management & Application hosting
- Disaster Recovery
- Remote Support
- On-site Operations Support
- Technical Support
- VME Consultancy

We own OMAC, ORMA, EMCS and OMNIA!

Miracle GA – The VME MASTERS

Will Public Sector achieve FOI Act Compliance by 2005?

A recent report from Anite Public Sector says that over 50% of public sector organisations are falling behind the schedule to achieve the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act and Open Government - with 20% not having any idea who has responsibility for implementing these guidelines within their organisation.

The FOI Act, which comes into force in 2005, will give anyone the right to be told if certain information exists and the option to request access to that information. Members of the public, for example, will be able to request information on all aspects of local and national government activities, with obligations placed upon those authorities to disclose it. There are very few exemptions allowed for a refusal to disclose information, including material that predates the act itself. Before the Act comes into force, public authorities are required to have specified which information they will routinely publish. For many, the deadlines associated with this are rapidly approaching.

The report is based on a survey carried out by independent research agency, Mind's Eye. It highlights who is currently dealing with FOI and Open Government within a public sector organisation - 46% legal officers, 14% corporate services, 8%

administrative services, 8% IT services, 8% records management, 6% chief executive/department heads and 4% data protection officers. (The sample was of local and central government agencies - 80% local government and 20% central government.)

There is no time to lose. Public sector organisations that have not yet formulated a plan for complying with the FOI Act need to address this issue urgently. Senior management should not only be involved in the process but also committed to it. The research suggests that resistance from above is a major stumbling block for some public sector organisations achieving the open government framework.

"Secondly, public sector organisations must establish a stringent timeline in complying with the FOI Act. 2005 sounds a lifetime away but citizens' rights are fully enabled in only 27 months time. Action is needed to highlight the amount of work still required and budgets need to be set. Being realistic now as to what investment is needed to achieve this compliance will avoid unnecessary costs later."

If you would like a copy of the full report, please send an email to: info@aniteps.com

From the Archives

Looking back 20 years, at about this time of year we would have been preparing for our 2900 User Group Autumn conference at York University. This was to herald several visits to York later in the 80s and early 90s under the Large Systems User Group and AMSU banners. A fond recollection of that particular event for many people will be the appearance of Roy Castle as our entertainer at the Conference Dinner. A report of the event reads:

"It was rather a coup to obtain Roy Castle to entertain us after dinner and he offered his full repertoire of song, dance, instrumental and joke, seeming to enjoy the proceedings as much as his audience. It is understood that on his own account he extended the session by 30 minutes to join Eli Woods and Jimmy Casey for their well known 3-man act. Who was the Committee member described by Roy as having the biggest gap between nose and chin? Who was he quoting when he said:

*'And as I bid my last farewell
I hope I have not blundered
I'm sold on 2900'*

Roy invited Harry Barnes (is there any limit to his talent?) to add his mellifluous tones to the closing number."

An additional cultural activity for delegates was a visit to the Vikings in Britain Exhibition. This proved to be a prelude for the development of the Jorvik Centre which is renowned today as a major visitor attraction in York.

And the George 3 User group was still going strong in those days. A presentation by Dr John Pinkerton to the Group was highlighted in the 2900 Newsletter to draw attention to the imminent introduction of privacy legislation which was anticipated to lay considerable burdens on DP departments and organisations. *"In the absence of a draft Bill it is difficult to assess the implications, how it will affect applications and businesses, and how much it would cost directly and indirectly. However when the Bill does appear there may be only a few months or weeks to study it and if necessary organise a substantial common body of opinion to persuade Government that more needs to be done."*

It was 1984 when the Data Protection Act became law.

Tailpiece

Prompted by a recent question in the Times seeking the definitive answer to the question: “Which came first the chicken or the egg?” AXiS News with the help of some contributions from the Web explores the question of why the chicken crossed the road - looking at particular breeds of chicken:

Windows Chicken:

You see different coloured feathers while it crosses, but cook it and it still tastes like ... chicken.

OS/2 Chicken:

It crossed the road in style years ago, but it was so quiet that nobody noticed.

Microsoft Chicken:

It's already on both sides of the road. And it just bought the road.

VME Chicken:

With tender care will cross and re-cross the road many times.

George 3 Chicken:

Who removed the road?

C++ Chicken:

The chicken wouldn't have to cross the road, you'd simply refer to it on the other side.

Web Chicken:

Jumps out onto the road, turns right, and just keeps on running.

Java Chicken:

If your road needs to be crossed by a chicken, the server will download one to the other side. (Of course, those are chicklets)

COBOL Chicken:

```
0001-CHICKEN-CROSSING.  
IF NO-MORE-VEHICLES THEN  
PERFORM 0010-CROSS-THE-ROAD  
VARYING STEPS FROM 1 BY 1 UNTIL  
ON-THE-OTHER-SIDE  
ELSE  
GO TO 0001-CHICKEN-CROSSING  
ENDIF
```





AXIS CONFERENCE
wants

You

Bletchley Park
November 7th 2002

- Keynote presentation from Fujitsu Services.
- Get an update from Fujitsu Services on their support strategies for the Series 39 range. (DM1, S3L, DX and SX)
- See and use Fujitsu's latest MiniNova mainframe (Yes, we'll have a machine installed at Bletchley Park available for you to use.)
- See the Enigma Cypher machine (But we can't promise Kate Winslet!).
- See Colossus, the world's first electronic programmable computer.
- Influence the development of Open VME.
- Opportunity to win Enigma videos/DVD's