Petus



Quarterly Bulletin For the Institution of Analysts & Programmers

Issue 25 March 199**8**

The Year 1999 Problem

Scanning through some of the Year 2000 documents on the Web, my attention was grabbed by a phrase to the effect that

"during the eighties it was not unusual for programmers to use 9/9/99 in the date field to signify the last record"

Hmmm. Now there was something that did strike a familiar note (unlike most of the more 'traditional' year 2000 issues which passed me by... I never worked on a mainframe). Sure we used 9/9/99 or something similar to flag a whole range of things. When you're dealing with a variable number of records in a fixed length buffer or string array it is often much easier, more efficient, and safer to flag the last record (a null record) rather than maintain a counter. And where better than the date field? It's generally the only field where the full range of legitimate values are known at the onset of the project, often being computer generated PLUS it isn't likely to get totalised or averaged by mistake (at least not unless

the mistake is a whopping big one!).

Of course, the practice died out as the years progressed (at least it should have) and I certainly shan't lose any sleep over it since I'm fairly certain none of the code I worked on in those days is currently in use. Others, particularly those in the financial or retail sectors, may not be so lucky, particularly as the big institutions seem to cultivate legacy code and often run systems way beyond their expected (and intended) lifetime.

The problems such code can generate are mindboggling in their diversity. To take the simple example of flagging the last record it means that any record beyond the first occurrence of 9/9/99 will typically be ignored IN THAT PARTICULAR BUFFER/ARRAY. If the program processes blocks of records (e.g. for efficient disk access) this will repeat for each block. Given a mixed batch of dates such as encountered in order processing this will produce an apparently random loss of, or failure to process, records. (In this particular case the tell-tale sign will be that no orders with the date 9/9/99 will ever be processed - all other dates will indeed be affected at random.)

Apparently 9/9/99 was also used extensively in archiving procedures as the expiration date for data which was to be kept forever. This is probably only the tip of the iceberg as 9/9/99 and its variants have likely been adopted as flags by programmers, system developers and users alike (for much the same reason). The first crop of problems can therefore be expected to arise in late 1998/early 1999 with another, possibly larger, one around the beginning of September 1999. There is no doubt the next few years are going to prove very interesting!

Edwin J. Keen

GOING FOR A JOB?

Belonging to the IAP improves your chances of landing that new job.

Let us have details of any job application which you are making, and - without making any reference to you - we will brief your potential employer on the IAP and the importance of IAP membership as an endorsement of members' qualifications and standing in the profession.

Call Mike Ryan or Nicole Edwards on 0181 567 2118 or fax 0181 567 4379

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So, another year, another IAPetus..... reading the papers, it seems that very slowly people have at last noticed that the 'Millennium' approaches and that they will need to do something about making sure that their computers will be able to cope with years beginning 20.. instead of 19..! Good analysts and programmers like you have no doubt made sure all your programs are perfectly adequate already, so now have time to help everybody else. Good luck!

A new home has now been found for the IAP website. The address is "http://www.iap.org.uk" - you don't need that annoying iapdg on the end any more! Moves are afoot to be able to provide services such as 'lifetime' email addresses for members. You become fred.bloggs@iap.org.uk and your email is sent to whichever address you specify; you can change your email address and just ask for your email to be sent to the new one. Watch this space for more details once this service is set up.

In the meantime, you can link your personal or business website to the IAP one, and read general information on the IAP. All Council members are accessible by email, as is the Institution office and *IAPetus*.

We also now have a mailing list,

for general discussion and chatter via email. This has been set up by **Graham Foster**. To join the happy throng, send an email to "List-Server@INCA.CLARA.NET" with "SUBSCRIBE IAP" in the body of the message. To send a message to the mail list ensure that it is addressed to IAP@inca.clara.net. I hope to see you there. So far, there is a debate ongoing as to the need, and suitable format, for language-based discussion/self-help groups. Many thanks to Graham for this initiative.

Enough from me.....

Megan C. Robertson

The Professionals

Continued from last issue

7. If computers are taught at schools, programmers could be as abundant as clerks. You wouldn't need a profession.

Does an 'O' Level or 'A' Level in economics make one an economist? I believe that there is nothing wrong with teaching people analysis techniques and one or more programming languages (I edit an electronic magazine called M Web Magazine about the programming language M and run a very popular tutorial in it) but still believe that a professional is that person who can prove that s/he has a profound understanding of entire spectrum of subjects appertaining to software analysis and development. Besides, it is my impression that while the number of computers in schools is increasing many teachers are either are simply using these machines to aid in the teaching of other subjects or, even worst, simply leaving them to gather dust and age undisturbed. Using ready made software, a teacher can facilitate teaching a new Math topic, improve the student's understanding of optics in Physics or show students where Zaire is and maybe even play its national anthem. Some institutions also run Word Processing, Spreadsheet and Database courses for their students. As mentioned earlier, for a substantial number of people "my kid is learning the computer" means that their child spends some time using or mastering off-the-shelf products.

Another type of ignorance that harms SDP is the popular belief

that all there is to programming is knowing how to write a program. This is a totally crocked idea because, as explained elsewhere there is more to programming than just writing programs. Those who sell such tuition promise blatantly or otherwise that after the x-day course attendees can find work as programmers. The only difference between becoming an office clerk and a computer programmer is that for the latter one must put in a few hundred pounds and a few days. On the same pretence it is therefore logical that if one goes for the do-it-yourself approach (buy a book and work through it at home). If programmers would like to be considered as professionals all this has to change.

8. Turning computing jobs into a profession will kill off their element of creativity.

One has to be very careful about the interpretation given to the word "creative". If by creative one means anarchic, than it would be a good thing to stop these acts. Professional software development is not something one toys about with as each "oops" means that the enduser is not being served as they should be.

If by creativity we mean some new type of program (à la Visicalc), than I cannot follow why professionalism is inversely proportional to new ideas and concepts in computing. Why anyone must disassociate professionalism and creativity simply doesn't make sense especially when most of the software (as most modern analysis methodologies suggest) involve

SDP working with non-SDP to computerise their solutions. Companies such as Microsoft and Corel boast that the functions and layout of options are a result of user feedback and not of their programmers. Some software houses today make use of professional artists for the design concepts and allow programmers to focus on the programming aspects alone. Therefore it follows that if a non-SDP is creative, the probability that the computer version will also be brilliant has a greater chance of being a reality if it is dealt with by professionals rather than by amateurs. This is because the pro has a wealth of knowledge at her/his disposal.

9. What is to happen to people in the industry. Chuck them out on the street?

The creation of a profession given the current scenario means the withdrawal of unrestricted entry from one predetermined future point in time. Anyone within the profession will be expected to register and from a particular date only graduated professionals will be allowed to practice this trade. For example members of IAP will be automatically registered and will therefore be allowed automatic entry. For a short duration one would get a situation where some might opt to free-ride into the profession but no body is stopping such people today. Once the doors are shut, only those with a valid pass (having the necessary training) will be allowed in.

10. The demand for computer staff is too great for it to work.

The Director General writes

Older members of the Institution may remember the time when we had a Graduate grade and a Licentiate grade, both squashed into the gap between Associate Member and Member. Therefore it may seem bizarre that the Council should have decided to reintroduce Graduates at this time. Perhaps I can explain the thinking behind the move.

The first thing to appreciate is that, at 250 points on the IAP scale, the new Graduate grade comes below Associate Member in the pecking order. Furthermore it will only be available to students who have gained all 250 points from an IAP-approved course of formal study and examination in analysis and programming.

The new grade is meant to encourage students to gain a proper mastery of the basics of analysis and programming from the outset, so that they are properly equipped to start jobs in the industry, and have a firm foundation on which to build more sophisticated skills.

At 250 points Graduates are some way below the level of Associate Member (350 points). They are expected to fill this gap by rounding out their experience in the realities of professional employment, and at least beginning to develop the allround capability that marks the true professional. Graduates who obtain suitable employment should make Associate Member within two years. Some of them may be able to cut this down even further by taking the

projected IAP Business course.

Older members are probably not aware of the extent to which the IAP's admission standards have been tightened in recent months. This is partly to prepare us for a Royal Charter, but more immediately because the Council are determined this Institution shall become synonymous with the very highest professional quality standards. No matter what the opposition may do - we're going to be the best. IAP members will be recognised as the absolute cream of the profession. OK, we may not be there quite yet, but that is our declared aim.

One not so helpful effect of this policy has been that Associate Member has now moved beyond the reach of most college courses. We can still admit an applicant who has a good BSc(Hons) degree in Computer Science from a leading UK university, but most other people will only qualify for AMIAP when they have a couple of years of postgraduate working experience under their belts. With the best will in the world, this is something the colleges cannot give them.

On the other hand, the Institution is increasingly pressed by would-be entrants to the profession, wanting to know which courses they should take. And while we have said on many occasions that the Institution has no ambition to get into the education business, when IAP members who employ computer staff tell us students are learning the

wrong things, we cannot stand by and refuse to help.

The new Graduate grade is pitched at an attainable level for the colleges. At the same time the Institution has drawn up its own syllabus, and will monitor courses to ensure that both the content and the quality meet the changing needs of the profession. This has cleared the way for us to renew and strengthen our long standing links with Computeach and the other private colleges. We are in discussion with the Open University and a number of other public sector universities, all of whom are interested to start promoting courses which will lead directly to Graduate membership of the IAP.

Some very highly qualified youngish people call us from time to time, complaining they are unable to get jobs in the industry. A few questions, and it is clear where the problem lies. These people have failed to acquire the skills and knowledge that would make them employable. On the other hand, there are members of the IAP well into their sixties and beyond, who are fighting the clients off. What we should be doing, as an organisation dedicated to the welfare of the profession, is ensuring that students do learn the right stuff, and they do develop the all-round skills which will make them employable, not just now but for life.

Michael Ryan

The Professionals –Continued from Page 2

Point 9 has been put forward so that, one would not cause a depression in the availability of personnel. Once the new restrictions go into force, in the short term demand might exceed supply and the basic laws of economics will result in a larger number of people seeking out the profession. All professions have their high and low periods and no one says that during the high demand one opens the doors to simply run down the peek.

In the long run I feel that, because SDP will be professionally educated and trained, the number of errors will fall while at the same time there would be increased productivity. This will mean that the number of manhours per job will fall and thus will not oppress the ever lasting shortage even more.

11. It is simply impossible; how can you block the doors and windows.

Setting anything in motion is never an easy task, but with appropriate legislation, an organisation such as IAP, good planning and correct timing there is nothing to halt the seeds from sprouting. One cannot expect that this is something that we suddenly wake up to and presto the computing profession now exists.

Legislation that obligates government corporations and companies on the stock exchange to use only professionals in inhouse software would be a definite first step. Professional bodies scrutinise and ensure that this is being done thereby keeping down the number of law breakers. Also, the professionals themselves will find it in their own interests to safeguard their profession. There is nothing abnormal or unethical about this suggestion. Such institutions have to produce an audited set of accounts. Can a nonaccountant do the job?

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Council Elections 1998

Well - it's come to that time of year again - and we've had all the nominations in from those standing for election or re-election to Council which has resulted in the following nine people standing for seven places (five for three years, one for two years, and one for one year). Their manifestos are printed elsewhere in this issue of *lapetus*.

A voting card should also be included – please fill it in and return it to us!

Cecilia Flavell, Edwin Keen, Selva Naidu and Megan Robertson retire by rotation, and Nick Swain resigned his seat earlier this year. Paul Lynham and David Morgan were co-opted onto Council during the last year, and under the standing orders Council operates by, offer themselves for re-election at the first election after their co-option.

As in previous years, voting will be by single transferable vote for seven separate places. The first five persons elected will get the three year places, the next person will get the two year place, and the seventh will get the one year place.

As is common practice, the runners-up will be considered should any casual vacancies occur on Council prior to the next election.

Candidates for election to Council 1998

Steve Cumbers FIAP
Ms Jennifer Edwards FIAP
Mrs Cecilia Flavell FIAP
Edwin Keen FIAP
Paul Lynham FIAP
David Morgan FIAP
Selva Naidu FIAP
Mrs Megan Robertson MIAP
(Cmpn)
Eric Vischer FIAP

Alex Robertson Vice President Returning Officer

Election Manifestos

Steve Cumbers FIAP

My first program was a BASIC implementation of an algorithm to approximate Euler's constant. The code was written off-line onto punched paper tape and submitted for batch processing on an ICL 1900 under George 3. The machine spat it back while printing messages of disgust on the teletypewriter console - I had wound the tape backwards and up-side-down! Upon correction, the program ran successfully first time - a rare piece of beginners luck of course, but I was hooked. The date was 1974: the year Thatcher became Conservative Party Leader, Nixon resigned in the aftermath of Watergate, and Turkey invaded Cyprus.

During the past two decades I have worked for over a dozen organizations including The Natural History Museum, Rank Electronic Tubes, Bromley Authority, Chemical Bank, Charterhouse Bank, London Commodity Exchange, Merrill Lynch, National Australia Bank, Credit Suisse, and currently Citibank. Appointments have ranged from seven years on the permanent staff to one months Consultancy. In most positions information systems/ technology has been the main thrust, although the applications have varied considerably.

Quality and integrity are the watchwords of any profession. Quality is engendered by education and standards, whereas integrity is about ethics and conduct. As a member of the education Committee I would like to focus upon education in general, and the pro-

posed introduction of IAP diplomas in particular. Rather than slavishly following the University model, we should adapt it to create a course that produces not just competence but employability. Our diplomas should set the accreditation standard for qualifications offered by aspiring professional members. Our diplomats should be sort after for their pragmatism and professional acumen.

Jennifer Edwards FIAP

My career in computing started in 1964 as a civilian at the Royal Airforce College at Cranwell. This was followed by 6 years in a Local Authority Highways design office where I wrote software to design water and earth retaining structures, bridges and project planning and costing systems using HP Basic and Fortran. Next came a period of some 10 years on heavy civil engineering projects as an engineer then as site manager. Software was written on construction sites to assist manage the projects. During the 1980's I was involved with a small software house writing applications using compiled Basic, Assembler and later C. I then had a period of 3 years as an IT Manager for a London Borough learning SSADM and PRINCE, actively developing on UNIX and improving hands on skills using C++. Redundancy caused a period of little employment. On the suggestion of senior IAP Members I started contracting. Over the past 3 years I have been involved on Windows Client Server projects using VB, VC++ and SQL in

development and SQL Server DBA roles. I would like to actively pursue our efforts with CPD and the objective and award of Chartered Status for the Institution's Members.

Thank you for your interest.

Cecilia Flavell BA(Hons) PgCert (UID) FIAP

During the 20+ years of working in the ever expanding field of IT, I have worked on mainframes, minis and PCs: both LANs and WANs and a variety of comms - planning and installing as well as working with. I started as a trainee operator (they still existed then), moved to support, then progamming and finally analysis, and have been both employed and self-employed. Systems Analysis and formulating and ensuring follow-through of IT strategy are now my main areas of work, along with the usual daily management tasks.

The speed of change in IT means that it is ever more difficult to maintain skills and this is not always appreciated by employers who believe that home PCs are evidence of how easy IT is. It also concerns me that there are some who, having only a superficial knowledge of the latest technology, manage to obtain highly paid work and then move on leaving behind a partially finished project and no documentation. This does nothing to help the standing of the IT profession. It is my hope that the IAP will help to increase awareness of the benefit of a truly professional approach to work and will encourage employers to recognise that membership of the IAP is

an indication of this approach. In order to do this, the IAP needs to have clear standards for entry and to assist members in the maintaining of a CPD record. It is in this area that I have tried to make a contribution over the last three years and, if reelected, would continue to do so.

Edwin Keen FIAP

Paul Lynham MSc FIAP

For the past fifteen years, I have lectured in Information Technology, both part and full time. Ten years ago I set up a company to produce commercial bespoke systems for varied clients and have produced applications for use in agriculture, medicine and education. Since then I have also become a director of another company producing educational software, one product being the leader in its field.

I hold a Masters in Computing, but my proudest moment was when I was elected as a Fellow of the Institution of Analysts and Programmers. I have a lot of enthusiasm for the IAP and hope to bring a range of skills that have been learned the hard way. I have experience at board level, including sitting on the board of Governors of Pencoed College, chairman of the College's IT Committee and being a coopted Member of the Council of the IAP since last June.

IT is becoming deeply woven into everything we use. Analysts and programmers are the people who are relied upon to get these things right. If elected to the Council, my aims would include promoting the Institution, enhancing and developing further support for our members and to see the Institution become a leading force in any moves towards chartered status for analysts and programmers.

David Philip Morgan

I have been on the IAP Council since being co-opted last year. I've found the experience to be an exciting one as I see what is happening behind the scenes in our Institution and also gain an insight into the way things are moving in our industry. I am constantly amazed at the breadth of experience and backgrounds we encompass.

My own background took an interest, that was barely a hobby, and made it the skill from which I earn my living. I have recently set up my own company as an IT contractor. I am currently working as a Business Analyst for British Gas in Staines. I have worked in many different countries, generally not as an IT specialist but rather dealing with social needs. It was mainly because of the need to use IT to collate, analyse and report that I have developed the skills I have.

My background is definitely varied and, to me, very interesting. It has allowed me

to gain an insight into the varied way that we work as IT specialists. Many have come into this business through our experience rather than through an academic route. I see the IAP as an organisation that will serve the interests of those who may have come from a broader area than the confines of a computing degree. However, as an organisation I believe that we should promote and support our members in gaining professional skills.

I believe that the IAP is doing a great job of representing our interests but I think we need to grow. I believe we should ask our members to recruit for us.

Selva S. Naidu LLM, LLB(Hons), MSc, DIC, MBA, FIAP, ACIArb, AMIEx, Advocate & Solicitor (Singapore), Solicitor (England & Wales)

I am a Singaporean living and working in the United Kingdom. Having a Computing Science as well as a Legal background, I inevitably practice as an Information Technology solicitor with the city firm of Holman Fenwick & Willan. Besides serving on the Ruling Council, I additionally serve as the President of the Singapore UK Association and on the Executive Council of the Singapore Business Group. I also work closely with the Department of Trade & Industry to promote trade and business between the United Kingdom and Singapore.

Whilst on the Ruling Council, I have worked to expand the range of services available to our members (particularly the insurance schemes and legal support scheme) and set into place the basic requirements for an application for Chartered Status. Together with the Director General, I also happen to be one of the Institution's representatives on the Parliamentary IT Committee at the House of Commons. If reselected to the Institution's Ruling Council, I would continue working in this vein.

I look forward to continuing to serve the Institution.

Megan C. Robertson BSc MIAP(Cmpn)

Like many other members of the IAP, I have followed a nomadic path into computing starting off with a degree in botany! Marriage to a 'computer nut' led me into learning how to use one myself, with the assistance of Open University courses and 'on the job' training as head of development in a small software house. Now I work in partnership with said computer nut, running our own company, my areas of specialism being web page writing and technical documentation.... this being combined with raising my daughter (sitting playing beside me as I type) and research for a PhD.

Above all, I think computing is FUN! Of

course it has many uses but it is an enjoyable and satisfying pursuit which can be a pleasure as well as a way of paying the rent and feeding the cat. I believe that computers will become a core part of society as we move into the next millennium, that the person who cannot use a computer will be as unusual as one who cannot drive a car today. It is up to us, the computer professionals, not just to create computer systems able to serve that need but to go beyond, to tap into the great potential which universal access to information brings, to assist people to dream their dreams and see their visions come to fruition.

The role of the Institution is to foster professionalism amongst those of us who provide computer services to the world. This can be achieved by promoting a professional attitude and approach, by education, by example and by giving true status in the eyes of the world to those who pursue excellence in the computing profession. I would like to continue being part of that effort.

Eric Vischer FIAP

I was born in Holland, grew up and was educated in South Africa but am now a naturalised British citizen and have been resident in the UK for the past 24 years. I have been a Fellow of the Institution since 1983.

I started as a trainee programmer in COBOL on IBM mainframes in 1969 but returned to university to obtain a B.Com degree at the University of Cape Town. After emigrating to the UK in 1974, I recommenced my IT career as Data Processing Manager, but moved on to do analysis and design as a project leader with various software houses both in the UK and in Europe before switching to becoming freelance in 1978. This was followed by periods of work in the USA and Europe mostly as an analyst/programmer for large multi-nationals. A short period as an IT Consultant with a large management consultancy has been followed by a long spell at BP. There I have been using IS methodologies supported by CASE tools to develop a UNIX-based transactional system for the downstream sector of the oil industry.

My main interests now are in improving user interfaces to systems technology and the simplification of systems.

I feel the Institution has made enormous progress in recent years with major initiatives in education, improving the image of the Institution, its relationship with recruitment agencies and attempts to make the Institution more relevant to its members so I would like, if elected, to continue supporting these initiatives but to concentrate on the relevance of the Institution to the very large numbers of our overseas membership.

Did You Receive a Tax Return Last Year?

If you did, you will receive another one in a few weeks. As you are no doubt aware, the Inland Revenue has already raised £100 million from fines for late submission of last year's returns. Interest and surcharges on late or incorrect payments will significantly add to this sum over the next 6-9 months.

If you want to avoid paying fines and penalties, you should make a note of this year's deadlines:-

September 30 - if you want the Inland Revenue to calculate the amount of tax you need to pay, you must complete your tax return and all necessary schedules and send them back to the Revenue by this date. They will guarantee to let you know how much you need to pay, in time for you to make the payment by the 31 January 1999.

January 31 1999 - If you have chosen to calculate your own tax liability, this is the latest date for submission of your tax return. It is also the last date for payment of any tax due for the 1997/98 tax year.

If you had any difficulties completing your return last year, you may wish to take professional advice this year. There are a number of organisations completing returns for a fixed fee (check to make sure they are not charging for each additional schedule).

One company offering a service is Tax Watchdog Limited. They offer a fully comprehensive postal PAYE service for a fixed fee of £59.95. This fee is irrespective of the amount of work involved. They already work with many of the biggest organisations in Britain and have a very large client base. If you want further information, call David Davis at Tax Watchdog on 0161 4807717.

The Professionals – Continued from Page 3

government computer contracts are awarded to only those companies who make use of computer professionals all software development houses stand to benefit and will ensure that they employ such people. Once this has been used on the larger companies. most software houses would have adjusted to using professionals for the job. These same people will be utilised for any type of contract, be it large or small. Until it becomes common practice to use professionals, companies who make use of professionals will surely advertise this fact. People outside this group would find it in their interest to work towards obtaining a professional status.

It might be difficult to stop the small firm from using whoever it likes (or for that matter develop the solution itself), just as it is difficult to stop one playing doctor on oneself. But in our democratic society, there are harsh penalties for those who play doctor on someone else. Given that: (a) many third-party software houses would already be using professionals and (b) illegal practice is an offence, publishable by law, this industry is sure on the road to maturity.

In just one generation, the number of automatic entrants would have started to diminish and aside from law breakers (who exist in all professions), it would become common practice for the majority of people interested in the profession to seek the proper route towards becoming a software development professional.

12. Code is buggy, will professionals accept the responsibility of defective code? For what will they be accountable?

When one moves up to the status of a professional, one must accept the responsibilities that accompany the new status. I believe that once this industry reaches the level of maturity depicted above, the programs generated will be of a very high quality and that on the whole the overall code will be of a respectable type. I would like to clarify that with all the complexities surrounding code generation, coupled with the pressures to produce code one must accept that sometimes bugs will filter in (for every layer who wins a case there is one who loses it).

It would be better if a large number of countries decide to recognise this profession at the same time. Once a country has bred professionals who know their job well, foreigners will desire these professionals and, as is the case today with sources of cheap programming, foreign organisations will seek such people for important projects not because of the cheap cost, but because these organisations will be guaranteed quality personnel. As with other professions, foreigners would need clearance before they can freely practice. This restriction prevents low quality programmers from looping into the system. In the event that this is not possible, someone has to be the leader. Leaders are those who normally take the risks (bruising a knee here and an elbow there), but they are also the people to reap the benefits (arrive first).

Chris Bonnici

Chris Bonnici is MIS Manager for The Malta Branch of Royal Insurance and has written numerous articles in both paper and electronic magazines. He edits an electronic publication at

http://www.mcenter.com/mwm-us/ and maintains a web site at http://www.geocities.com/~cbonnici/

His e-mail is chrisb@ 4u.net. If you have any comments, queries and additions you would like to make to this paper, he would appreciate your posting.

Poor Health can Seriously Damage your Wealth

A large number of members are freelance and time off due to medical problems can be very costly.

We are of course fortunate as a country to have our National Health Service but this can be a cumbersome machine and simple procedures, such as a sporting injury that could take months to rectify with the possibility of 'down time'.

The members Group Health Plan is available to overcome these delays and obtain treatment quickly getting you back on your feet and working.

This is a Group Scheme and

therefore Group discounts apply and you will be surprised at low subscriptions for such a comprehensive cover.

For a fast quotation or more information contact our Insurance Brokers, Insurance Management on: 0117 927 2234.

We are particularly pleased to welcome the following members who have been admitted as Fellows of the Institution since *IAPetus* was last published:

Peter Birley

In 1981, following a number of short periods as a programmer in industry, Peter Birley moved into the insurance sector, since when he has become one of the country's leading experts in this highly specialised area of IT. Peter first joined the Institute of London Underwriters, becoming their Head of Computer Operations in 1986. Not long after he obtained a directorship with Alexander Howden Group Management Cervices, and became IT Director to the whole of the Howden International insurance broking group in 1989. In 1993 he left Howdens to become Head of IT for London Market Claims Services. Since 1996 he has been a consultant.

Andrew Hardie BSc(Hons)

Leaving university in 1974 Andrew Hardie joined a small electronic automation company, becoming their only programmer. By 1985 he had become Research Director, responsible for all their hardware and software development, but continued to do all the programming for a variety of industrial, military and government projects. Then in 1990 events conspired to precipitate a drastic change of career direction. Andrew became a consultant to the Government, since when he has undertaken work for a wide variety

of Departments and similar bodies, including the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, Buckingham Palace, and Tony Blair's office in the Commons. Having recently finished computerising Hansard for the Commons, Andrew is now turning his attention to Parliamentary Questions.

Peter Hartill

An electrical engineer who started his career with English Electric at Stafford in 1956, when their DEUCE computer was the fastest thing around. In 1965 Peter emigrated to New Zealand, where he stayed for more than 20 years, working for Cutler-Hammer, an electronic and automation company, ultimately as Manager of the Electronic Systems Division. Returning to Britain in 1987 he undertook a variety of freelance projects for industry before joining the Spire Group in 1990 as Control Systems Manager, a post he has held until very recently. Spire specialises in automation and real time software for industrial applications.

John Lillywhite BSc(Hons)

On leaving university John Lillywhite worked as a programmer for a few years, firstly with Ferranti and then with Southern Television. But the bulk of his career has been with IBM, where he spent 25 years doing a variety of jobs. Initially John was a PL/1 analyst/programmer working on systems to track IBM parts and user problems Europewide. After installing systems in several European countries he

moved on to co-ordinate European systems with those used in the USA. After a period as a computer operations planner John moved into sales support, where he was responsible for the successful completion of a number of substantial collaborative projects with academic institutions. On leaving IBM John has returned to hands-on programming, working on AM/FM applications for several UK network utility companies.

Robert Pickles

Nine years in the RAF ensured that Robert Pickles's IT career has been biased towards the defence sector. As an electronic technician he was on the hardware side to begin with. but started programming systems used on the Nimrod Mk2 aircraft in 1986. On leaving the Service in 1988 he became Software Team Leader with Computing Devices of Eastbourne, spending three years designing an extremely complex and sophisticated mobile ground control system for the military in Saudi Arabia. Since going freelance in 1991, Robert's repertoire has expanded somewhat, encompassing time sheet and personnel resource forecasting systems for the BBC, voice recognition work and ship braking. But inevitably he remains the man you call to sort out problems with real time aircraft systems. Recent years have been taken up with work on the Harrier, the Malaysian Navy Weapon Control System (with GEC Marconi), and the Sea King radar system, work which is still ongoing.

Laurence Somerville

Laurence Somerville has worked as an analyst/programmer since starting his career in the army in 1986. Initially he was involved with development and implementation of the Army pension system in PL/1 on the RAPC computer at Worthy Down near Winchester. This was followed by a tour of duty as Team Leader with allied forces in the Netherlands. The work involved design and implementation of programmes in Cobol, Fortran and Assembler used to provide land forces with information about aircraft and airports. There were also a number of Special Projects. Returning to Worthy Down in 1993, he has continued his work on the enhancement of Army pay and pension systems.

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Dear Sir,

I read with interest the article entitled "The Professionals" in issue 24 of IAPetus and will agree that there are a lot of "cowboy solutions" being sold, in fact my company has been in the fortunate position (although may be no so fortunate for the client) to pick up and sort out the mess on several "cowboy" installations. However in all cases they have been the result of a salesman "boxshifting" a solution without really caring if d was right for the client and the client blindly believing every thing told without really evaluating the solution or taking up references from similar previous projects.

I do however take umbrage at the fact that the writer of the article assumes that only a graduate has adequate qualifications to call himself an IT Professional. I have worked within the IT industry for the last 10–15 years and progressed along the same path as a majority of older technologists, starting as an operator moving up through programmer, analyst and project management until I started my own company several years ago.

In my experience it is more often than not the so-called consultants employed by companies who are fresh out of university, all be it with relevant degrees and quite often post graduate qualifications, who are responsible for the grossest misselling of solutions. Although these people may be well versed in IT theory, they do not have the faintest idea of how to apply this to a business based solution.

If our industry is to clean up its name we do indeed need to tighten

up our act. Maybe like the other professions we need to implement a period of apprenticeship, during which time basic skills of the profession are taut such as understanding a customer's requirements, even knowing when to turn a job down as you cannot meet the customer's requirements within their budget restraints.

Until these basic skills, as well as the programming and project related skills, are taut the IT industry will be plagued with a bad name and high profile failures. So let us not concentrate on the need for academic qualifications. H should be the responsibility of the organisations such as the IAP, BCS and CSSA to strive to implement standards that have to be achieved before an individual or company can set up and call themselves information technologists, to provide any sort of IT based solution.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Rosen

Dear Sir,

I write regarding your editorial in the September issue in which you mention museums devoted to computing. Britain used to have one at Cavendish Road in Stevenage. It was the ICL Museum and some of the exhibits dated to shortly after the turn of the century when one of the forerunners of ICL was a subsidiary of what is now IBM. The technology now in use was Dr Hollerith's famous tabulating system and among the many exhibits were line printers from the twenties or earlier

with individual characters reaching out on long arms like a giant typewriter mechanism and wide, tractor fed, continuous paper chuntering through at a respectable pace. I am told that the museum now forms part of the Science Museum so we at least have a section of a museum devoted to computing, in London, to add to the Bletchley Park museum.

Your members may also be interested in exhibits in the Museum of Lace in Nottingham, featuring working Jacquard looms in daily use. On a visit there

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last year I was fascinated by the descriptions of the work of the early Jacquard programmers and how that technology was adapted to the service of machine lace making and the subsequent prosperity of Nottingham. The term 'main frame' might have been applied to the wide loom in those days while the program instructions for making the lace patterns contained on the wooden 'drilled tablet' loop can clearly be imagined as the precursor of paper tape and 80 column punch card input/output devices. Interested visitors have plenty to see!

Yours sincerely,

Adam Gardiner

Dear Sir,

You state you do not have a 'junk mailing' list, then perhaps you should. I am surely not the only Member to object to receiving any unsolicited mail from outside sources you may approve of. I think your policy on this is flawed and should be re-examined.

Yours faithfully,

S.A. Filsell FIAP

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