BUSINESS Connections

Perth Unis Take Technology Leap With AAPCS Help

Perth is the site of two major new projects where AAP Communications Services is integrating leading edge technologies to provide high speed communications links for the city's four universities.

One project links the four - Curtin, Edith Cowan, Murdoch and the University of Western Australia, along with the CSIRO - to the Australian Academic Research Network (AARNet).

The other is to provide voice, data and video links for the five widely spread campuses of Edith Cowan University, the city's newest, formed from the amalgamation of four teachers' colleges.

The projects, worth more than $600,000 each, will have their nerve centre atop the BankWest tower, one of Perth's tallest buildings.

Perth is the only city where the entire contract for integration of the local hub - known as PARNet - for the national universities network has been awarded to the one organisation.

Its university campuses are now linked with AARNet, and through it to the Internet, via 128kb ISDN lines. The 34mb microwave links will increase capacity several hundred times.

BankWest tower in Perth, the site for AAPCS microwave links

Their networks are made up of dozens of separate LANs, and network servers, modems and thousands of PCs.

FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DESK

As we enter the second half of our calendar and financial year of 1995, it is pleasing to report that our revenue and strategic goals are in line with our targets established late last year.

We have appointed an Executive Board of five directors, each responsible for a key element of our business and its relevant infrastructure. The company structure will continue to change as our areas of expertise expand in line with our plans to develop AAPCS into a $100 million business by the end of 1997.

The market place in which AAPCS currently operates - network integration and the provision of services within the LAN, WAN, voice, video and data communications sectors - is valued at approximately $4 billion, a figure which, based on worldwide trends, is predicted to double by the turn of the century. It is therefore imperative that we position and avail ourselves with superior skills and a disciplined, service-orientated approach to ensure our continued growth and success, continuing to deliver a service second to none.

The market place is highly competitive and unforgiving. To compete successfully, and to expand and maintain profitability requires a commitment to customer satisfaction and service coupled with a high regard for customer expectations. It's anything but easy, however, that is our commitment and subsequently our responsibility.

The support and commitment of AAPCS staff and management is critical in achieving our goals. I look forward to sharing our progress with you over coming months.

Terence I. Nickolls
Chief Executive Officer

Demand for Spirits Expands Network Requirements

When it comes to alcohol, Johnnie Walker, Dewars, Bacardi and Gordons are some of the most famous brand names in the world. All - and many more - are either manufactured or distributed by United Distillers, the world's largest liquor distributor.

For the Australian market, some product is imported in bulk, then stored, bottled and distributed from the company's major warehouse facility at Huntingwood in Sydney's west, whilst other goods are bottled in Scotland and imported.

"Huntingwood is probably our biggest user of resources from a computer perspective - all our order entry and customer-related applications are run from there, whereas financials and general administration are run from our Bondi Junction office," said David Winkle, User Support Manager for United Distillers (Aust.) Limited (UDA). The company has three offices in Sydney, and one each in Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, with around 230 staff Australia-wide.

"Our initial relationship with AAP Communications Services (AAPCS) was developed three years ago through maintenance of the desktop equipment we have throughout Australia. We were in a position to look around at what was available in the market place and AAPCS tended to stand out by the services they could offer and also from a pricing perspective, which was obviously a requirement on our part," Mr Winkle said.

AAPCS Senior Systems Engineer Richard McDonald, UDA's David Winkle and AAPCS Account Manager Julanne Saltiel at UDA's Bondi Junction office

"The relationship we've built up with AAPCS has helped us move ahead"

The initial maintenance contract with AAPCS covered around 120 PCs, file servers, printers and any additional desktop devices. At that time UDA was operating a Pyramid mainframe, since replaced by an AS400 platform, which is also being upgraded.

The AS400 is located in UDA's Bondi Junction office, which is networked to the other six Australian offices via four 48K DDN and two 64K ISDN links, using Cisco routers and Synoptics distribution hubs.

Maintenance of the communications equipment has also recently been taken on by AAPCS. "We offered that opportunity to AAPCS based on their past performance," Mr Winkle said.

"We're now in a position where the bulk of our electronic equipment is covered for maintenance with AAPCS - it's good for us because we manage one contract and it makes life easier in terms of point of contact, we don't have to deal with a dozen people, remembering which organisation is covering what."

AAPCS Account Manager Julanne Saltiel began working with UDA over 12 months ago and identified the growth potential for both companies.

"I was confident we could deliver a broader range of services, so David and I sat down, uncovered areas that needed addressing and now AAPCS looks after most of UDA's computer equipment across Australia," Julanne said. " We contract a senior engineer to UDA for system administration when required, and have physically relocated their entire network, managing every component of the office move to Bondi Junction, from de-commissioning the network in Rosebery on Friday to re-commissioning ready for operation in Bondi Junction on Monday morning.

"UDA now recognises us as more than just their maintenance provider, they consult us for most of their computing requirements."

Mr Winkle said UDA appreciates the flexibility of options provided by AAPCS. "(AAPCS Senior Systems Engineer) Richard McDonald has joined us for a couple of two-month periods, which has been very beneficial and helped us best utilise the in-house facilities we have.

"It is nice to be able to call on that resource - certainly having someone here who understands the environment we have and how to manage it is very helpful."

UDA will soon be upgrading its system to three times its current performance capability to satisfy ongoing needs and AAPCS has been asked to help with overall management of the network.

"Our relationship with AAPCS has grown because they have a good understanding of the external environment, they're getting new products in all the time so they're aware of what's available.

"I tend to rely on them to provide feedback on what we're doing and trying to do, we have regular meetings so we can go over things," Mr Winkle said. "We've been very fortunate with the information AAPCS has shared with us and certainly the relationship has been very instructive. It's helped us move ahead."

Vodafone Extends Microwave Link Contract With AAPCS

Around 80 per cent of the links in Vodafone's network are microwave-based and supplied by AAPCS

Vodafone, the national digital mobile telephone operator, has more than doubled its contract for AAP Communications Services to install microwave links around Australia.

AAPCS won a major contract in 1993 to provide 200 microwave links operating in a variety of frequency bands.

In June this year, agreement was reached with Vodafone to extend this contract to a total of 500 microwave links.

In addition, AAPCS is to provide maintenance services nationally to Vodafone to June 30, 1998.

"The most pleasing aspect of this contract extension has been the vote of confidence that Vodafone has placed with AAPCS," said Chief Executive Terence Nickolls.

"We are delivering to Vodafone equipment and services to a high level of quality."

Terence said Vodafone had implemented an aggressive rollout program to capture a larger share of the market for digital mobile subscribers. This had resulted in Vodafone stepping up its requirements for links nationwide.

He said that when Vodafone commenced services in October, 1993, approximately 20 per cent of the links used in their network were provided by AAPCS. The remaining links were optical fibre systems provided by Telecom. Today about 80 per cent of the links in Vodafone's network are microwave based and supplied by AAPCS.

"The Vodafone contract has enabled AAPCS to expand its radio business significantly - from four people in 1992 to about 40 in 1995," said Bernie Seth, Manager Radio Systems Division.

"We have enjoyed a solid platform to grow our radio business in other areas such as MDS and in New Zealand where we have secured orders with Clear Communications, their second national telecommunications carrier."

Bernie said that digital microwave links of various types and capacities were available in quantity today and could be implemented within a week of the end sites being ready.

"These links are more cost effective than fibre systems for hops of about five km or more. Microwave links are also reliable with end-to-end performance required for cellular systems.

"The use of microwave links has thus become a significant element of competitive advantage for operators such as Vodafone."

David Clarke, Vodafone Contracts Manager, with Bernie Seth, AAPCS Manager, Radio Systems Division, and Graeme Holm, Vodafone Senior Project Manager

Advice, Design, Installation, Support - AAPCS Gives James Kirby The Total Solution

The age of computer networking and integration is well and truly upon us, yet for many managers and business operators it remains mystifying and confusing.

For expanding businesses or those simply wanting to update working methods and improve internal efficiency, there are many technical options available - the difficulty comes in knowing where to start, how to go about the whole process of upgrading equipment and, most importantly, how to find good, independent advice.

For James N. Kirby Holdings Pty Limited, a small but busy holding company in Sydney's inner west, AAP Communications Services (AAPCS) was the ideal choice when Company Secretary Owen Beattie decided to upgrade computer equipment and install a local area network.

"We thought we'd try to get on top of technology and get the best use of the equipment available to improve our efficiency, reduce the amount of paperwork and help us keep our staff numbers down," Mr Beattie said.

"To achieve our goals, we started to look at a network, which we'd considered over the years and could see the benefit of, without really knowing much about it. AAPCS was recommended to us by a third party. Account Manager Brad Gray came along, we had a chat and got the ball rolling."

Richard McDonald, Owen Beattie and Brad Gray pictured in the boardroom of James N. Kirby Holdings Pty Limited. Behind them is a portrait of the company's founder, Sir James Kirby

"We've found AAPCS to be very professional, they don't lose us in the jargon. I'd definitely recommend AAPCS to other companies..."

Mr Beattie and Managing Director Robert Strauss discussed their requirements with Brad and AAPCS Senior Systems Engineer Richard McDonald, who explored a range of options.

"After analysing their computing and business requirements and discussing a range of possibilities with them, we recommended the installation of a tightly integrated imaging system," said Brad.

"This will enable them to search, archive, edit and distribute documents, including incoming and outgoing faxes, all on line through their network. Richard researched the most appropriate imaging system for their business and also designed the technical specifications for the cabling and LAN components."

Mr Beattie said he was impressed with AAPCS's ability to deliver a 'one stop' solution: advice, supply, installation, project management and ongoing support.

"From talking to them we learnt about faxing, imaging, cabling and many other things we weren't aware of. We're using their expertise, which is great," Mr Beattie said.

"We've found AAPCS to be very professional, they don't lose us in the jargon, they've been very supportive. We were concerned about how quickly things are changing with technology and whether systems would be out of date in two years, and they've assured us they're using equipment that can expand with our requirements in the future.

Mr Beattie said one of his main goals was to be able to access information quickly and easily and to have a more efficient and reliable system of information backup. James N. Kirby Holdings is the holding company for the James N. Kirby group, which was founded by Sir James Kirby in 1924 and consists of four distinct business operations: manufacturing machine tools, automotive components, refrigeration and wholesaling, and a contract labour hire operation.

"While we don't get involved in the day to day running of the other companies, we help them with the financing and advisory work," Mr Beattie said.

"We are investors and property managers; we also administer the family companies and the James N. Kirby Foundation, which provides grants to various organisations around Australia.

"So although we are a fairly small office here, there is a lot of information coming and going all the time."

"Because we knew what it cost to set up a network from what our other companies have done, we knew the costing was right. We were also looking for network system support and phone support which AAPCS offers.

"We've spent a bit more than we intended but we're getting more applications than we originally knew were available, and a system that allows us to grow," Mr Beattie added. "We're not that computer literate, we just want to use the equipment, we don't want to know how it works. We want someone else to look after that problem.

"Everything's gone well so far, excellent, no problems at all. Of course the proof will be in the pudding, once everything's up and running, which we're looking forward to.

"I'd definitely recommend AAPCS to other companies who are looking at doing the same thing we are."

Ring, SWIM or Fax, The Defence Department Has Its Communications Covered

Canberra's Defence Centre is breaking new ground with the installation of Australia's largest and most sophisticated voicemail and voice processing system.

Planning for the Octel/VMX voice messaging system, supplied by AAP Communications Services (AAPCS), began late last year and within a week of cutover on June 1, access had been provided for all users, completely replacing existing systems.

Clive King, Director Voice Communications Systems, says he set out to find the very best of systems to service what is the biggest private communications network in Australia.

The Defence National Administrative Telephone - or DNAT - system, which extends along the east coast from Melbourne to Townsville, has a user base of 40,000. The department's Canberra network has 12,000 subscribers and some 70,000 call records a day.

Mr. King says, "I put a lot of time into research to find a system that would do the job. I wanted the Rolls Royce of systems and there was really only one organisation which could meet our needs.

Wherever they are, Octel/VMX voice mail provides Navy personnel with a sophisticated link to family members on shore

"One of the key services to be switched to Octel/VMX voicemail is the Navy's link between ships at sea and their family members"

"Most of the systems we evaluated were PC-based and cobbled together with extra bits to be added on as required. The Octel/VMX product was the only one I encountered which is a serious, purpose-designed system."

He said the AAPCS package was not selected on the basis of price.

"In fact it was quite a considerable achievement to persuade the government, through its tendering process, to purchase the highest priced system."

Mr. King says the system will bring greater efficiency to many areas of the department's operations.

"The voice processing system will be used to answer queries, auto fax information from menus, paging and interfacing with mobiles, for public relations and service emergency purposes, family liaison messaging and to provide everyone who needs one with their own voice mailbox.

"It is a real productivity tool. For the first time, we will have good information messages," Mr. King said. "Rather than wait in endless queues, callers will be driven through a menu to find the information they want. Once they've made a choice the information will be automatically faxed to them.

"If they need to speak to someone, the system's Help Desk function will direct them to the appropriate person.

"For internal users, a list of their voicemail messages will come up on their PC screens, allowing them to go straight to the one they want, rather than listening to a dozen or more in turn. This will be one of its most popular applications."

One of the key services to be switched to Octel/VMX voicemail is the Navy's link between ships at sea and their family members - the Ships' Weekly Information and Message - or SWIM - line.

SWIM delivers recorded messages from Royal Australian Navy ships around the world with reports of what they have done in recent days, plus personal messages from individual sailors. Family members can ring in and leave urgent messages for onpassing, but the service will now be gradually upgraded to become a full two-way system.

A similar service will also operate for troops on exercises in Australia via DNAT, or deployed overseas with United Nations forces.

The new system has the resources to handle all of this without difficulty, Mr. King said. "There is virtually unlimited capacity, with 72 ports into the system and it can store up to 550 hours of voice messages.

"They are exciting projects, much more complex than local area networking," said AAPCS National Operations Manager David Backley.

"We are working with the very latest technology, some of which was still in beta development when we started, and bringing it together in a way which has never been achieved before.

"Apart from ConferNet (which links remote aboriginal communities in central Australia via satellite videoconferencing) this is one of the largest integration projects we have undertaken utilising our radio, digital and networking skills."

Peter Horth, Head, Computer Networks Management at Edith Cowan University, who has been deeply involved in getting both projects off the ground said, "It quickly became obvious that we needed to take the technology step into ATMs.

"Whole CD Roms are being moved around our networks and we could see horrific costs looming with the spread of person to person video.

"Access to the WorldWideWeb is also increasing rapidly. A quarter of our users are on it now and we expect that to grow to 50 per cent by the end of this year and 100 per cent next year."

Peter said that with the EC campuses stretching 80 kilometres across the Perth metropolitan area, maintenance was another critical issue.

"We were very keen to have someone who was strong locally as well as nationally so that we could rely on support 24 hours a day."

"AAPCS was probably the only project manager who could bring it all together," David said. "We have a strong technical presence in Perth, and I think the universities enjoyed dealing with a company with such high levels of technical expertise."

AAPCS Perth Manager Neil Weller said there would be at least eight, and possibly as many as 12, microwave links on the BankWest rooftop and two ATM switches, which converge the LAN, voice and video traffic for transport through the broadband network.
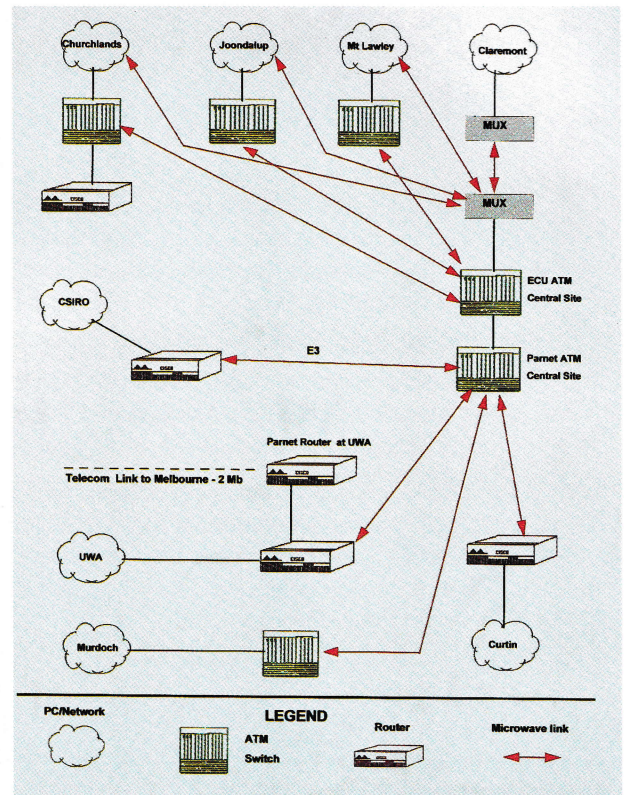
PARNet and ECU network topology utilising ATM switches

"The contracts really establish our presence in Perth and put us in an excellent position to bid for other major projects of this kind," he said.

"We will have ongoing maintenance and facility management contracts with both networks for many years. At least two of the universities plan further expansion to their networks and it is likely the Bureau of Meteorology will also be linked up."

David said that AAPCS had a very tight schedule of less than six weeks from start to finish of the project.

"Our involvement ranged from making the microwave radio mounts to bringing in equipment from the US, staging it in Sydney, shipping it to Perth, and integrating the components to produce a total wide area network at the client site."

"The system will also be a boon to our Building Management people for reports on things like leaking taps, faulty lights etc. When callers report a fault, the system will autofax the details to the maintenance authorities who will schedule the repairs."

AAPCS Voice Processing Product Manager Kerry Scotland conducted a series of seminars to introduce Defence Centre users to the system's range of applications.

"It's been an exciting project for us because we've been able to develop the system beyond the normal voice processing requirements and build in and test enhancements to meet
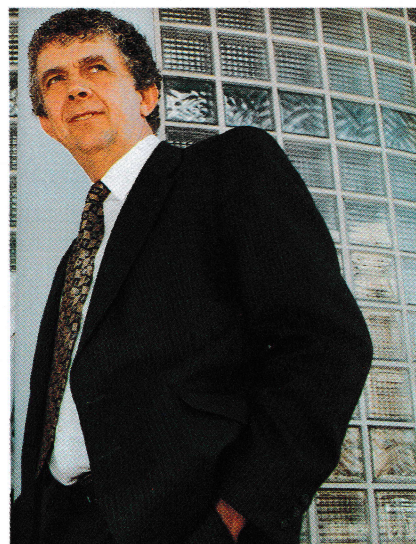
Clive King, Director, Voice Communications Systems for Canberra's Defence Centre

specific needs before installation," she said.

"Training represents a mammoth task given the number of people involved, so we've developed a PC-based program to provide a self-paced training course for all users."

Mr. King said the Defence Centre was breaking new ground in technology applications and would be used as a reference site by others interested in following their lead.

"We are the only government department in Canberra with the Octel/VMX system. Other departments have voicemail but not on this scale, and they use voicemail rather than voiceprocessing," he said.

Toshiba International Finds On-Site Maintenance Is Delivered On Time

The leafy Sydney suburb of Lane Cove may seem an unlikely setting for the development of software to monitor the world's power stations, but at Toshiba International Corporation, designing such software for the company's head office in Japan is a major activity.

Toshiba International (not to be confused with Toshiba Australia, which is the commonly-known seller of laptop computers and whitegoods), also develops and sells industrial power plant monitoring and control systems and electric motors.

The company has branch offices in Perth, Melbourne, Brisbane and Wollongong with a total workforce of around 80. Its national computer network and equipment, operating on a Unix platform, and various software applications have been maintained by AAP Communications Services (AAPCS) since late last year.

"We have a maintenance service contract with AAPCS for most of our computer equipment - all the PCs, modems, routers and printers in the company," said Network Systems Administrator Jack Szewczyk.

"I am perfectly happy with the service AAPCS provides. They take care of all our equipment on a national basis except for our Sun System file servers."

Mr Szewczyk, who is responsible for the network and all computers and communications in the company, said the AAPCS contract involves three different levels of maintenance.

"Toshiba International has selected a 'one call' solution for their maintenance requirements, covering their communications and telecommunications networks," said Julanne Saltiel, AAPCS Account Manager.

"Toshiba also deals with AAP Telecommunications for their long distance calls and their requirement is to place one telephone call to the AAPCS Customer Service Centre, regardless of the problem. From this point our customer service staff diagnose the fault and swiftly channel it to the appropriate technical representative in AAPT or AAPCS."

Added Jack, "We can request a particular response time when something breaks - within three hours, eight hours or one day - depending on the priority of the equipment. For example,

a router is considered very important and needs to be fixed immediately, but we have several spare printers if one breaks down. We've found this a very satisfactory way to operate."

AAPCS has recently extended its association with Toshiba International to include a systems engineer working in-house, full time, on a contract basis.

AAPCS network consultant Edward Sheldon has been working at the company's Lane Cove head office since January, an arrangement Mr Szewczyk said gives Toshiba all the benefits of an on-site expert, without the headaches of hiring a permanent staff member.

"Edward helps us with maintenance of our network, and the maintenance of Windows and

AAPCS network consultant Edward Sheldon with Toshiba's Jack Szewczyk

Microsoft Office software applications. In some ways his is a help desk position, in that he helps users, but he also assists with general network requirements - installation, system administration and so on.

"We decided to go with a contracted AAPCS engineer instead of hiring someone permanent in-house, as it gives us greater flexibility.
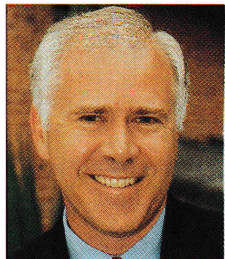
"We could have employed a contractor from anywhere, but what was good about AAPCS, with whom we already had a good relationship, was that they could actually provide us with a person immediately and if that person didn't fit our needs they could send us someone else.

"It makes it a lot easier for us, and it means there's no risk involved."

Introducing... The AAPCS Executive Board

AAPCS is pleased to announce the formation of an Executive Board, with five Directors: Jeffrey Roll, Ron Gauci, Ian Smith, Greg Tocknell and Mal Chandler.

Jeffrey Roll, Director of Marketing, has been with AAPCS for three years. Jeffrey has extensive experience in information technology, having worked for a major computer vendor 12 years and the Department of Civil Aviation before joining AAPCS. As Director of Marketing, Jeffrey will manage all public relations and positioning of the company, as well as product management.

Jeffrey Roll

Ron Gauci, Director of Sales, joined AAPCS in 1994 as Victorian Branch Manager. Ron has 10 years industry experience and was formerly with Ferntree. His charter is to focus on the AAPCS sales effort to achieve the company's five year goals.

Ron Gauci

Ian Smith, Director, Strategic Development, joined AAPCS in 1992. Ian has extensive experience in the IT industry, particularly in the development of strategies for industry. He is charged with looking at new technology applications in all areas of AAPCS operations.

Ian Smith

Greg Tocknell, Director, Finance & Administration, joined AAPCS in March. Greg, a chartered accountant, has worked in computing for 12 years for such companies as Sun Microsystems and Wang Computers. Greg is in charge of all Finance and Administrative functions, including computer systems.

Greg Tocknell

Mal Chandler, Director of Services, joined AAPCS in August. Mal has a strong background in the IT industry, having previously worked for Digital. Mal is now in charge of building AAPCS services and deliverables and overseeing operations.

Mal Chandler

A number of structural changes have resulted in the company now applying a true marketing focus to its future.

I am delighted to be driving this new and important business unit and have been hiring staff to provide the product management skills required.

The diverse product base offered by AAPCS means that we must maintain a constant scan of new developments across Voice Processing, LANs, Microwave and Satellite-based products (Radio), plus the ever-increasing array of offerings in the Wide Area Network (WAN) arena.

It is here that we shall focus the majority of our energies over the next few months to ensure that we offer to the market a comprehensive and integrated set of WAN solutions. This will include wireless offerings as well.

The strategic goal of the company is to achieve revenues of $100 million exiting 1997. To achieve these goals will require a more intensive marketing effort, including advertising and correct company positioning, whilst still being considered as part of the AAP Group. No small challenge.

I look forward to advising you of a number of exciting developments in coming months and promoting the AAPCS brand at every opportunity.

Jeffrey Roll

Director of Marketing

STOP PRESS

AAPCS has appointed Telecommunications Resources of Melbourne as an Octel/VMX Applications Development House.

Telecommunications Resources have developed successful applications for a number of organisations, including the Victorian Government.

"They understand the needs, business drivables, quality service and the technology," said Kerry Scotland, AAPCS Product Manager, Voice Processing.