UniNews

UniForum. The International Association of Open Systems Professionals

First Open Group Meeting Charts New Course
X/Open and OSF Consolidation Takes Form

Some 300 representatives from X/Open Co. Ltd. and the Open Software Foundation (OSF) member companies met Mar. 11-15 in San Francisco to hear firsthand how The Open Group will operate and what impact the new organization's programs will have on them. The Open Group was recently formed by combining X/Open and OSF memberships.

In their introductory remarks on the opening day, Jim Bell, interim president and CEO of OSF, and Geoff Morris, president and CEO of X/Open, said that the mission of The Open Group was to increase the compatibility and interoperability of open systems through a collaborative process. The goals included clarifying customer requirements; facilitating research and development of technology in response to these requirements; endorsing and promoting specifications for de facto standards; testing and branding products to meet

these specifications; and articulating to customers, vendors and the public the benefits of open systems.

A more detailed description of The Open Group's mission and goals will be found in the April issue of *UniForum's IT Solutions* where a new column, "Inside The Open Group," debuts

The first day of the meeting was dedicated to presentations from The Open Group's key staff directors and chairs of The Open Group's councils. These talks were called vision statements and included remarks by user representatives Alain Robert of Elf Aquitaine in Paris and Bill Estrem of 3M in St. Paul, MN. The talks gave an important introduction to the new Open Group Customer Council (OGCC), which will create a new model for bringing business-user requirements to the fore. The OGCC will establish a business requirements

committee made up of representatives from customers, software vendors and The Open Group board and staff, including the CEO. The committee's job will be to propose the five most important business requirements for members and to delegate these requirements to management subcommittees.

These working groups will be either business requirement groups (BRGs) which are expected to be long-term bodies that deal with multiple related issues, or task groups chartered for short terms (perhaps up to a year) to focus on a single task. The BRGs work to develop and publish a program plan based on a needs analysis and a timetable. They also establish task groups as needed and report back regularly to the OGCC. BRG members come from The Open Group's council mem-

High-Tech Theft on the Rise
Break-ins Include Violence, Abductions

As a target for thieves, silicon is as good as gold—or drugs—these days, according to law enforcement agencies. An eight-inch silicon wafer with 100 chips can sell for $50,000 on the street. Even a few memory chips from a desktop computer can mean a fast $100 or so. What's more, the chips, like drugs, are easily transportable and almost impossible to identify or trace after a theft.

No wonder then that thieves—especially gangs of Southeast Asian criminals—have been targeting chips and other high-tech items in a series of robberies and break-ins throughout Silicon Valley and other advanced electronics manufacturing areas. Detective Larry Whitman of the Santa Clara (CA) Police Department estimates that in the last two years alone, over 100 manufacturers have reported what is known as "take-over" robberies: incidents where thieves break into a manufacturing site, tie up employees and make off with whatever they can carry away. At times, the thieves actually kidnap company owners or CEOs on the road or at their homes and take them back to the facility, forcing them to unlock secured areas where chips are stored.

Danish Affiliate Group Sells Internet Company
Multimillion-Dollar Deal Signed with TeleDanmark

The Danish Unix-Systems User Group (DKUUG), based in Copenhagen, Denmark, has a problem that most associations would love to have: what do to with a very large amount of money. DKUUG recently announced the sale of DKnet, an Internet service provider (ISP) company which the group has developed over the past eight years. The buyer, TeleDanmark, is the country's main telecommunications company. With the proceeds from this transaction (described as "several million dollars"), DKUUG is now in a strong position to expand its presence in Denmark and further promote Unix and open systems through conferences, trade shows and publications.

"I am absolutely amazed by the success we've had with this project. It surpassed my wildest expectations," says Kim Biel-Nielsen,

First Open Group Meeting Charts New Course

bers with an Open Group facilitator.

Other opening statements made during the day included the independent software vendor (ISV) vision, presented by Karl Klessig of Enterprise Solutions, of Westlake, CA; the technical vision, given by CTOs Mike Lambert of X/Open and Ira Goldstein of the OSF Research Institute; the market vision from Peter Shaw of OSF and Allen Brown of X/Open; and the process vision by Dick O'Donnell of Harris Corp. in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Newly formed BRGs on security, the information highway, architecture and interoperability met later the same day to put the new process into effect.

The following four days were given over to presentations, seminars and organizing meetings that included a kickoff meeting for new task forces as well as updates on new technical research areas such as Java and DCE Web. Richard Jaross, UniForum's executive director, gave an address that spoke about the new ways UniForum is already cooperating and assisting The Open Group. As previously reported in *UniNews*, the first tangible result of UniForum's cooperation has been to make all OGCC companies new End-User Corporate

Sponsors of UniForum. UniForum will also provide blocks of association memberships to OGCC company staff. New cooperative ventures are already in the works and include technical book publishing, user requirements research and a value-added *Open Systems Products Directory*. UniForum members will hear more about each of these initiatives in future issues.

The Open Group's major event was the formal dinner at the new San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where members gathered to honor a number of council members who had provided unstinting service to OSF and X/Open. Ted Hanss from the University of Michigan was singled out for his outstanding leadership. After the awards, the evening's keynoter was introduced by UniForum's president, Michael Tilson of SCO, who took the opportunity to reemphasize that UniForum intends to provide as much encouragement and programmatic cooperation as possible to The Open Group. He then turned the dais over to his boss, SCO president and CEO, Alok Mohan, who made an eloquent statement of support to users from his standpoint as a vendor. Echo-

ing his remarks made at UniForum '96, Alok again stressed the need for innovation to be coupled with collaboration. There is no one company that can provide technological supremacy in all areas, he argued, so the proprietary model lacks the benefits of the open systems model which is based on shared standards and development.

Subsequent open meetings of The Open Group councils are set for June in Barcelona and September in Washington, DC. ◆

Correction

In the March 13, 1996 issue of *UniNews*, we gave an incorrect Web address for ENlighten Software of San Mateo, CA. The correct address is http://www.enlighten.sftw.com. We regret any inconvenience this may have caused.

High-Tech Theft on the Rise

Sometimes the thieves come and go unseen, as in a traditional burglary. UniForum reports that its offices have been burgled twice in the past six months, the last time during the weekend before UniForum '96. "They knew what they were doing," says Mark Neal, director of finance and administration, describing the criminals. "They knew everyone would be gone that weekend." Neal estimates that the second break-in cost the association about $5,000. The thieves took memory chips from several PCs, as well as an expensive color jet printer.

Describing his feelings after the theft, Neal says, "We felt violated. That's an overused word, but we work hard to have what we have here, and you get angry." He also points out that "somebody could have been working late and walked in on the theft. Somebody could have been injured."

A third way chips and expensive machines can disappear is through employees. These "inside jobs" are hard to trace and can result in sizable losses for companies.

High-tech theft is not limited to Silicon Valley; other areas in the United States have reported problems. Several microchip burglaries have recently occurred in Austin, TX, some of them for more than $250,000. Last year, local law enforcement agencies set up a special high-tech crime investigative unit in response to the thefts. Technical and financial assistance has been provided from local manufacturers and branches such as Advanced Micro Devices, Dell Computer, IBM, Motorola and National Instruments.

Detective Whitman has several recommendations for companies that want to "harden" themselves against thieves. Many of these sugges-

tions can be applied to any company, but they are especially relevant to high-tech manufacturers.
• Make sure your building is highly visible and well-lighted at night. Overgrown trees and shrubs can provide cover for criminals.
• Check that all outside and security doors have deadbolts with plates protecting the locks.
• Consider the use of alarms and surveillance cameras.
• Check that skylights, a favorite entrance for burglars, are protected.
• Secure expensive items in a locked area, and issue keys only on a need-to-have basis.
• Secure the loading dock area. Limit access only to employees and vendors involved in loading and shipping. Restrict parking near the loading dock area.
• Restrict parking near trash or dumpster areas. An employee can hide expensive items in cardboard boxes, take the boxes out to the trash, then retrieve them after business hours.
• To discourage "take-over" robberies, control access to your building. This includes providing only one visitor and employee entrance, complete with a secured lobby and reception area. Also provide visitor and employee badges.

Nothing, of course, can stop theft altogether. Speaking after the burglary at UniForum, Ronald Wong, UniForum's IS manager, reminds companies that they should prepare for the worst. "Treat theft as simply another disaster recovery item. Make backups and have a recovery plan, just like with an earthquake." ◆

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Don Nix: Keeping the System Running
Telecom Sysadmin Provides Hands-on Perspective

By Richard Cole

System administrators are enjoying a new sense of importance these days. Responsible for the care and feeding of rapidly growing midrange, client/server environments, a well-trained sysadmin can make a critical difference in a company's ability to operate successfully. Don Nix has worked for over two decades in system administration, currently for the Information Services Division of Southwestern Bell Telephone in St. Louis. He recently talked with *UniNews* and offered a unique, hands-on perspective on today's system administration and the importance of midrange systems in a massive environment.

Only a few years ago, system administration was the place to start a career rather than build it. In a world dominated by proprietary systems and mainframes, a sysadmin's job was usually confined to routine tasks like installing new systems, doing backup, troubleshooting and upgrading software. Then came local-area networks, wide-area networks and open environments with multiple hardware and software platforms. These new environments provide more functions such as distributed data access, e-mail and groupware, but they also demand more administration to ensure that all the parts are working together. Sysadmins also have to deal with critical areas like network security, user training and rising maintenance costs.

Don's career is a perfect example of this evolution from basic mainframe tending to high-level system administration in a client/sever environment. He began working with IBM 360 and 370 mainframe computers in 1974 at what was then part of AT&T. In a short time, he was promoted to weekend supervisor for the mainframes.
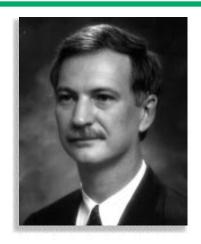
Don says that working with mainframe environments was especially valuable because it broadened his technical knowledge, particularly in the area of communications and networking. "I worked in our network control center for the mainframes, so I was familiar with V10 networks, IBM's Systems Network Architecture [SNA] and Token-Ring local-area networks," he says. "A lot of sysadmins these days might have worked on maybe one Unix machine, but they have no idea about communications. That knowledge is critical."

Early Unix
Don was next promoted to full-time Unix administrator, working on some of the early Unix computers. In fact, he mentions that he had responsibility for the very first Unix machine installed in the telecom industry, running on a 3B-20 processor. "I remember thinking that this was the fastest machine I had ever logged onto," he recalls. He also remembers that the computer was a far cry from today's integrated hardware. "When you opened the back, you could see that almost everything was tied together. It actually had removable circuit cards."

The 3B-20 machine was chosen in part, Don says, because its Unix platform permitted rapid

"I've always been one of those take-it-apart-and-tinker-with-it kind of people."

development. "The developers said that they could do it [with Unix] real fast, and they did it, and everyone was amazed." Application development was especially important to a telecom company in the predivestiture days, Don says. "We were a unique creature. We might buy some sort of accounting or asset management package off the shelf, but for inventory and a lot of other areas, we needed to develop our own software." Huge inventory databases are needed in the telecom industry to keep track of everything from telephone switches to cabling, and the software supporting these databases was highly customized. "That was the advantage of a Unix environment," Don says. "It is easier to develop software for specialized, even single-server, solutions."

When asked what Unix platforms he has worked with, he laughs. "What platforms haven't I worked with?" He specifically mentions experience working with DEC Ultrix, SCO Open Server, SGI Irix, DG-UX, Sun Solaris, AIX/6000 and the Pyramid "dual-universe" system that ran both the System V and the Berkeley Unix variant on the same machine.

Mainframe Versus Midrange
As someone who has worked with both mainframes and midrange, client/server environments, Don is in a good position to compare the two technologies. He doesn't feel that mainframes are going away, simply because there are so many currently installed. At the same time, he doesn't feel that they are going to regain the importance they enjoyed in the past. "I don't see growth in that area."

In contrast, the midrange world at Southwestern Bell is booming. "Every two or three weeks, someone around here is talking about moving their applications from the mainframe to the client/server environment," says Don. At the same time, he admits that midrange systems can be a challenge to manage because they are based on open platforms. "I find open systems so nonstructured," he says. "A lot of that has come about just from tremendous growth—it came about so fast that no one thought there would be environments like there are right now. But there are still problems in trouble management."

Accordingly, one of Don's top priorities these days is working on ways to structure both the operations and system administration of open, midrange systems. "In a mainframe world, everything is segregated," he explains. "You have a database administrator, network specialists and so on. But with open systems, it's hard to define who has what responsibilities."

For Don and his colleagues, the solution includes revamping the help desk functions so that certain people have responsibility for only certain areas. In the past, he says, sysadmins were assigned to one machine and were responsible for everything associated with it. "Now you really have to specialize." His team also is looking into distributed system management tools, including alarm monitoring and possibly even distributed sysadmin functions. "We need a platform that will allow a central help desk to do a lot of the repetitive tasks," he says.

Telecom Reform
As a long-time telephone company employee, Don has seen many changes in the industry, which have affected his career and the technology he maintains. When Don first signed on as an AT&T employee, he had the option of

moving among a variety of divisions, such as Bell Labs, Western Electric or local telephone operating companies. After the divestiture of AT&T, he became an employee of the San Antonio-based Southwestern Bell Corp.

In addition, the recent telecommunications reform bill is having a major impact on Don and his work. The bill allows, among other things, greater flexibility in providing voice, data and image services among regional telephone companies, long-distance carriers, cable companies and other providers. "I think the bill is good for the industry," he says. "The increased competition will be healthy."

The bill will also allow Southwestern Bell to consolidate its information systems. In the past, government regulations required Southwestern Bell to maintain separate data centers for its subsidiary companies which provide services like yellow pages and wireless communications. Now these centers are being consolidated to just two sites, in St. Louis and Dallas. As the telecom technical infrastructure changes, Southwestern Bell will consolidate even further. Don mentions that consolidation is a major benefit because his division has to pay telecom long distance charges like everyone else. Further consolidation will help lower charges and reduce operation overhead.

Taking Midrange Seriously
Don is happy that the "midrange-open-systems-client/server-everything kind of world" is final-

ABOUT DON NIX

Current Duties: System administration for Information Services, Southwestern Bell Telephone

Age: 10 years old

Birth date: Feb. 29

Years in the Industry: 22

Hometown: Oklahoma City, OK

Last Book Read: Peter Norton's *Windows 95*

Car He Drives: '91 Ford pickup

Favorite Nonwork Activity: Remodeling and repair at home. "I do all my electrical and plumbing work. I've finished a new kitchen, and I'm currently redoing a bathroom."

Suggestion for the Industry: "We need better certification of system administrators. Years ago, you hired a programmer and you had some sense of their background, but today you really don't know. It's really hard to find someone to do overall system administration."

ly getting due respect. As he puts it, everyone used to think: "What can that little box sitting over there actually do?" Now upper management is taking note of these little boxes and realizing how critical they are to an enterprise. "Maybe that's one of the problems with the environment I've worked in," Don says. "You take one machine and it doesn't seem to be significant. But you interconnect 40 or 50 of them, and you've got a pretty large project."

He mentions that his district manager, a man with extensive mainframe experience, has now become an advocate for midrange systems. Still, there are always new challenges in the life of a sysadmin. Sometimes other departments present a new system to Don and his team and say, "Here—install it." This naturally plays havoc with a sysadmin's budget. To deal with these unexpected arrivals on their doorstep, Don and his team now present a budget for system administration when other departments present their business case for new procurements. That way, sysadmin costs are built into the budget before implementation even begins.

"I think that's one of the most overlooked things in midrange systems today," Don says. "Namely, what it costs to run them day to day." With the growing complexity and importance of midrange systems, companies will be taking careful notice of these systems and the employees like Don who keep them up and running.◆

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NIIT Announces Multisite Manufacturing Project
Virtual Product Planning Will Reduce Time-to-Market

With all the ups and downs in today's economy, it's nice to hear some good news: the United States' manufacturing productivity is way up, over 17 percent since 1990.

Many factors are responsible for this increase, but a major component is U.S. manufacturers' ability to respond quickly to market conditions with accelerated product time-to-market. This acceleration, in turn, is based in large part on both reducing manufacturing time on the plant floor and streamlining the entire supply and distribution chain.

On March 15, the National Information Infrastructure Testbed (NIIT) announced an Enhanced Product Realization Project (EPRP). The NIIT, located in Denver, is a consortium of manufacturing corporations, aerospace and defense contractors, information technology providers and national laboratories focused on building applications for the national infrastructure or "information superhighway."

The EPRP involves creating for study a virtual, online model of the manufacturing and supply processes of Caterpillar, Inc., a global manufacturer of earth-moving equipment. In addition to Caterpillar, a number of other NIIT members are participating in the project, including 3M, Bay Networks, Digital Equipment Corp., Hewlett-Packard, Hughes Electronics, the Institute for Defense Analysis, Sprint, Texas Instruments, and the national laboratories of Lawrence Livermore, Los Alamos and Sandia.

"The first phase of the project is focused on the Internet," says Troy Eid, executive director of the NIIT. "We'll be studying ways to develop a sophisticated and secure environment for the use of collaborative tools." To replicate Caterpillar's manufacturing environment, World Wide Web servers will be set up at the company's manufacturing sites as well as at Sandia Labs and Hughes Electronics. Since 3M is a Caterpillar supplier and Texas Instruments is a dealer, these members will also set up servers to help replicate Caterpillar's wide-area manufacturing and supply chain environments. Eid says that during the project, team members will be testing different authentication layers, audit trails, user IDs, virus detectors and data encryption schemes.

During the second phase (scheduled after Sept. 15), more sophisticated applications will be integrated to further replicate transactions among manufacturing, supplier and dealer sites, using network technology such as Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM). Overall, the project will attempt to develop scalable and integrated information infrastructure models across multiple platforms to support real-time collaboration for electronic project scheduling, videoconferencing, computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) and other computer-integrated manufacturing functions.

Ideally, the EPRP will provide Caterpillar and NIIT members with valuable information about complete interoperability across both wired and nonwired networks, as well as secure access to multiple sites and applications. The NIIT will also investigate how the information superhighway can help manufacturers create more efficient workflows so workflow data can be "looped back" to improve the design and production process.

"This project is more than just a demonstration," stresses Eid. "This is an 18-month project that will replicate as accurately as possible the world that [Caterpillar and its business partners] will do business in. That way we can see where the holes are with our strategies and fix them before investing in a complete infrastructure." ◆

Danish Affiliate Group Sells Internet Company

vice chairman of DKUUG. "We now have a huge pile of cash. The important thing is to use it wisely."

DKUUG was formed in 1982 and now has more than 1,100 members throughout Denmark. The user group was originally involved in providing Internet access to DKUUG members in the Danish academic community. In 1983, DKUUG began allowing nonmembers to use the service. Demand grew so quickly that a year later, DKUUG formed DKnet as a commercial company offering Internet access and other services such as e-mail to individuals and business customers. DKnet has now become Denmark's largest commercial ISP, prompting the sale to TeleDanmark. Says Biel-Nielsen, "Our activities have reached a dimension which lies beyond what we feel an association should deal with."

TeleDanmark has also recently acquired Diatel, a service provider similar to CompuServe, and expects to offer services that include a country-wide electronic payment system. With the acquisition of DKnet, TeleDanmark will now control 80 percent of Denmark's Internet user market, estimated at over 100,000.

The sale of DKnet puts DKUUG in an interesting and enviable position. "It gives us the total freedom to do new things," says Biel-Nielsen. "Being an association, we have many people with many different ideas, so the trick will be to identify the best ideas."

Some of these ideas involve an expanded range of seminars and conferences. "Previously we couldn't have a seminar and conference which ran at a loss in terms of revenues," says Biel-Nielsen. "Now we have the flexibility to provide more programs and have better speakers." He says that in April, Danish officials will meet with the UniForum Association at Santa Clara, CA, to discuss ways that DKUUG can sublicense the services offered by UniForum in the United States. "That way, we can bring the best of UniForum to Denmark," he remarks. Biel-Nielsen also mentions that the DKUUG will use funds to expand the association's newsletter.

The position of Unix in Denmark is similar to that in the United States, according to Biel-Nielsen. "Unix is increasing in popularity, but it is increasingly invisible since it is mainly a server platform," he says. "As a server, it's noticed only when it goes down. Now, Unix doesn't go down, which means that it isn't noticed." With DKUUG's new efforts, the visibility of Unix and open systems in Denmark may increase significantly.◆

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UniForum Association, Box 327, 2901 Tasman Dr., Suite 205, Santa Clara, CA, 95054-1100. Fax (408) 986-1645. ◆

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