

QUESTNET EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER 1991

PRESENT: Mr Alan Coulter (Chairman), Prentice Centre
Dr Alan Hayman, Department of Business, Industry & Regional Development
Mr Ian Hunter, James Cook University

1. The meeting, which was held in Mr Coulter's Office in the Prentice Centre, opened at 2.30 p.m. Alan Coulter welcomed those attending and explained that he had called together this small group to discuss ways whereby the benefits of QUESTNet Stage II could be extended beyond the member universities to include both government and private organisations, it being considered that the Government, and in particular, DBIRD, would welcome such extension.
2. The meeting began with a presentation by Mr Mark (Wilber) Williams of the Prentice Centre on the present technical status of QUESTNet. He reported that the Megalinks to JCU and UCCQ were commissioned in mid-november and have been operating satisfactorily with the exception of a rather high data error rate for a time (which did not cause any operational problems) on the JCU link, and one major failure, lasting approximately 20 hours from mid-afternoon to mid-morning the following day) when the optical fibre was accidentally damaged near Sarina in North Queensland. The Megalink to UCSQ has been operating at 1.5Mbits/second since Monday 9 December after a period at lower speed.

It was noted that the UCCQ and JCU links are, effectively, 1Mbit/second links as there is a single 2Mbits/second channel shared as far as UCCQ. This was done with the agreement of the two institutions and DBIRD, to allow full implementation of Stage II within the funding provided. There will be some small ongoing cost savings for the individual institutions as a result, until such time as it is deemed necessary to upgrade the links.

3. Alan Coulter gave details of the Scitec Maxima Training Course to be run at Prentice Centre in February 1992, which will be attended by staff from all member institutions. He also indicated that Prentice Centre would be monitoring and reporting on network traffic, but stated his view that Questnet should now really concentrate on provision of services, bandwidth (and its use) being a secondary issue. It was agreed that while inter-site traffic might be interesting to monitor, overall link utilisation was more important.

Alan then tabled AARNet-produced graphs showing network utilisation since the inception of AARNet, and the AARNet Affiliate Members List. These were of considerable interest to Alan Hayman, who had not previously had the opportunity to study them. There was some discussion of the range and location of existing Affiliate Members in Queensland.

4. There followed general discussion on methods of promoting the use of QUESTNet, including how it might be possible to encourage government departments (e.g. DPI) to make available their databases on the network. There was also discussion on supercomputer access, during which ALan Coulter reported that the Maspar would be on the network by December 1992.

Alan Hayman summarised the discussion so far as follows:

- QUESTNet Stage II is in place
- External organisations need to be encouraged to join AARNet as Affiliate Members
- There has to be regular monitoring and reporting of network utilisation, including the facilities connected to the network
- We needed to give consideration to how government departments and agencies could join and become useful
- The supercomputer issue needed further consideration

Alan Coulter added that QUESTNet Phase III should be about getting services on the network, rather than increasing the network facilities themselves. This would require funding - some of which should be provided by DBIRD and some by the member institutions themselves.

5. It was agreed that:

- a) It might be desirable to promote the concept of a "supercomputer for Queensland" accessible over QUESTNet. Such a computer should be of a class unlikely to be affordable by any individual member institution, as it was recognised that individual institutions would probably wish to continue to provide such local facilities as they deemed individually necessary and affordable. This will need to be discussed further at a QUESTNet Management Committee Meeting.

ACTION: Alan Coulter

- b) Alan Hayman will follow up the question of encouraging Queensland Government Departments to join AARNet, with a view to their then being able to benefit from QUESTnet access and to provide on the network any databases which would be of general value locally, nationally and internationally.

ACTION: Alan Hayman

- c) Every attempt should be made to attract appropriate organisations to join AARNet as Affiliate Members. This could be assisted by sending a letter to Heads of Department in each University, promoting the

concept, enclosing a list of current Affiliate Members and an Affiliate Member Agreement. Alan and Ian will draft a suitable letter.

ACTION: Alan Coulter and Ian Hunter

- d) TAFE should be a primary target to be encouraged to have its Colleges join AARNet as Affiliate Members. This would probably best be done by having TAFE negotiate a central agreement with AARNet on behalf of the individual Colleges. Alan Hayman will follow this up with the appropriate Department.

ACTION: Alan Hayman

- e) DBIRD would put its Research and Development database and its General Industry Directory on the network as soon as possible.

ACTION: Alan Hayman

The meeting closed at 4.30 p.m.