

QUESTNET

Minutes of Management Committee Meeting

Sunday 29 November 1992

Held at the University of Queensland

PRESENT

Greg Barnett (Bond)
Alan Hayman (DBIRD)
→ Alan Coulter (UQ) Chair
Geoffrey Dengate (GU) Secretary
Ian Hunter (JCU)
Alan McMeekin (USQ)
John Noad (QUT)
Graham Rees (UQ)
Geoff Huston (AARNet)

APOLOGIES

Ian Jenkins (QCQ)

1. WELCOME

The Chairman opened the meeting at 10.15am. The Chairman welcomed all themembers to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance on a Sunday. Mr Dengate was invited to act as Secretary for this meeting. It wasforeshadowed that Alan McMeekin would act as Secretary throughout 1993.

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed.

3. BUSINESS ARISING

3.1 Government Relations

Item 3.3, 3.5 and 3.6 from the minutes of the previous meeting thataddressed Queensland Government Departments, QUESTNET Phase three and aGovernment briefing respectively were all marked to be carried forward.

Action: Alan Coulter and Alan Hayman toco-ordinate developments with respect to Queensland GovernmentDepartments.

3.2 External Access to AARNet

Item 5 of the previous meeting was also carried forward for a later meeting.

Action: Alan Coulter to prepare a draft Questnet Policy for comment by members.

3.3 Identification cards

Item 7.4 of the previous meeting was carried forward for a later meeting.

Action: John Noad to co-ordinate the development of a working group to investigate the options for co-ordinated approach regarding the usage of cards at member institutions.

3.4 Charging and Call-back

Alan McMeekin advised that the document at USQ was now essentially complete but that that document was relatively specific to that institution. Nevertheless, it was felt that it might be of benefit to other institutions.

Action: Alan McMeekin to circulate the draft document for funding computing and network facilities to other institutions.

4. OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

Other items that were placed on the agenda included:

State Government Liaison
Auditor-General Reviews
CASMAG

Further, the ordering of agenda items was discussed and modified to allow presentations by two visitors on either side of the luncheon break.

4.1 State Government Liaison Documents

It was noted that there is a need for the production of brochures and other documents and facilities to promote the features and functionality of AARNet to the Government community. These facilities could involve not just brochures but also on-line access facilities and help facilities that could be distributed via diskette.

Action: Alan Coulter to co-ordinate with Alan Hayman the definition of requirements for such promotional material and to define an appropriate course of action for the production and dissemination of that material.

4.2 TAFE Liaison

There is still some confusion about QUESTNet's relationship with TAFE and who should be the point of contact for TAFE. Following advice from Geoffrey Dengate, Alan Coulter attempted to contact a Mr Peter Detheridge (Director, IT Branch, DEVITR) to initiate discussions and to invite him to today's meeting. Mr Detheridge was not contacted prior to the meeting. Alan Hayman pointed out that while TAFE-TEQ are formally part of DEVITR they are a fairly autonomous group. He recommended that contact be made with a Mr Stan Seilf.

Action: Alan Coulter to contact Mr Stan Seilf (TAFE-TEQ) to arrange a meeting/luncheon for the Brisbane Directors and Alan Hayman to meet with and define the terms of any ongoing relationship.

5. SECURITY

5.1 Mechanism C Proposal - AARNsert

The Chairman noted that there was nothing to report regarding the Mechanism C proposal submitted to the funding authorities. Advice was expected at any time in the very near future.

5.2 Local Security Matters

The Chairman reported that the three Brisbane Directors of Information Technology had moved to establish a local Security Emerging Response Team (SERT) group to address, at both a management and technical level, the issues associated with security of their respective systems. As a result of this activity Graham Rees reported the following:

There is now a secure machine at UQ for work related with security issues. E-mail alias lists have been established for the dissemination of non-critical messages. Relationships have been established with the Federal Police and CERT at Carnegie Mellon University. The group had taken the philosophy of protecting the systems rather than catching offenders. It appeared that the Australian Federal Police were not technical experts at this stage.

6.0 SUNOS

Lengthy discussion ensued about the relationship with SUN and the ongoing security related problems. Most of those present had seen and were privy to the electronic documentation regarding the discussions held with SUN. As a result of the pressure from the Brisbane Directors on SUN, SUN had provided resources to assist QUT on behalf of other institutions to develop super jumbo patchsets for distribution to other sites. Alan Coulter tabled a letter from the Queensland Manager, SUN, which put in writing SUN's commitment to assisting Universities and to willingly participate in corporate activities to address the security related issues of SUNOS.

Geoffrey Dengate raised the issue of QTAC Sun workstations distributed to institutions for interfacing with the QTAC system. Specifically he raised concern expressed by his technical people that these workstations as distributed were not secure. This raised concern amongst most present as all were under the impression that these systems were being adequately secured prior to shipment to the various institutions.

Action: Graham Rees to investigate this issue as a matter of priority.

7.0 DIAL-UP

Graham Rees reported that the Kerberos facility for controlling dial-in access appeared to be working well. Geoffrey Dengate reported that the dial-back mechanisms that were presently being implemented at GU were experiencing some problems but that the institution was persevering with this technique in the short-term.

8.0 FEDERAL POLICE LIAISON

Each institution had made contact with the federal police regarding the relationships to assist in the ongoing security/hacker activity. This issue was discussed at length. Alan Coulter expressed his concern about privacy related issues and conveyed the UQ position to only release names of individuals to the Federal Police on a need to know basis. He indicated that he decided not to release the names of UQ System Managers nor the names of registered Kerberos users.

It was generally agreed that all present needed to know a good deal more about the relevant federal and state acts of parliament that address these particular security/hacking activities (e.g., federal crimes acts) and the applicability of these acts to universities and the obligations of the universities and individual employees under those acts. Further, we need to define the rights, roles and obligations of individuals. Graham Rees pointed out that the Australian Federal Police are interested in knowing the costs of institution's in addressing the security attacks as these costs have a direct implications on the sentences of individuals if convicted.

Action: Alan Coulter to prepare a draft paper on information dissemination re the various acts of parliament, privacy related issues. This draft paper might suggest possible avenues for education of relevant university personnel (e.g. half day seminar).

8.0a AUDITOR-GENERAL VISITS

It was noted that Queensland universities are currently being audited by the Auditor-General Department using new procedures with a new methodology and trial set of questions. Issues identified include back-ups, security, uninterruptable power supplies, planning in general, and disaster recovery planning in particular. This raised the issue of disaster recovery for AARNet. Geoff Huston spoke briefly on this issue and it was agreed that more detailed information would be useful.

Action: Geoff Huston to develop a report on disaster recovery/back-up facilities for AARNet.

9.0 RDN-CRC

Geoff Huston spoke of the demise of the RDN-CRC and specifically the budgetary implications for AARNet. THE AVCC had requested \$8.4M from the Government (of the original \$13M) to be spent over five years. The use of these funds would be to provide MBit capability for all the universities within a two year period and to then upgrade the facility to satisfactory handle video capabilities. Geoff indicated that he was fairly pessimistic about what might really happen and that AARNet may actually get nothing at all. Current budgetary position for AARNet based on current projections is a 1993 deficit of one million dollars. He further indicated that the situation for ongoing funding of AARNet is unresolved and needs to be addressed by the AARNet Board and the AVCC. There was concern expressed at the implications of the deficit funding and the possibility that such a shortfall might trigger the introduction of some sort of user pays principle which it was felt was not necessarily in the best interests of the development of AARNet and the furthering of research.

10.0 SOFTWARE SITE LICENCES

At this point the meeting was addressed by a Diane Edwards from Digital Equipment Corporation. Diane discussed the changes to the CSLG/ESL Agreements. Directors strongly conveyed their concerns about the unilateral changes to the Agreement, the retrospectivity of those changes, the loss of credibility for both the computer centres that had made recommendations based on expected life-cycle costs of Digital equipment, and also on the credibility being suffered by Digital. The Directors conveyed the opinion that while they could accept changes to the Agreement for new purchases, the retrospectivity for existing products and the licence costs for those products should not be changed.

A luncheon break was then held from 1.00 to 1.40 to which a number of technical staff who were preparing for the Networkshop were invited to attend.

11.0 STATE GOVERNMENT NETWORK PLANS

The meeting was addressed by Geoff Johnson, Director, Communications from CITEC. Geoff made a brief presentation and tabled documents outlining the Queensland Government initiatives in establishing SUNNET as a major step to reduce the cost of providing telecommunications services for the Queensland Government. QUESTNET Committee fully supported the Government's initiatives. It is believed that the network rationalisation through CITEC and SUNNET could be of significant benefit to the rationalisation of network links within and in between Queensland Universities.

Action: Graham Rees to liaise with Geoff Johnson regarding the technical telecommunication developments via SUNNET and their implications for the Queensland Institutions

12. SUPERCOMPUTING

Alan Hayman indicated that the Information Policy Board had agreed on the development of high capability of supercomputing for the state of Queensland based on co-ordinated development. He indicated that the facility at QSL was seen as important from the Government's perspective because the Government had provided significant funding to the establishment of that facility. The QUESTNET Directors expressed some concern at the QSL activity as it was seen essentially to be a CSIRO initiative and its usefulness to the University community was questionable. Debate followed about the use and suitability of this particular facility. During this debate, the issue of ongoing support was seen as paramount and that this particular issue was often overlooked in the funding of the capital costs associated with establishing such a facility. It was pointed out that some of the Universities were well placed to provide this support, certainly for the research community. It was noted in the longer term, of course, industry usage of supercomputing facilities was paramount and the need to liaise and co-ordinate industry and institutional activities were seen as particularly important.

13. NETWORKSHOP

John Noad gave a brief report. The Networkshop currently has 420 registrations. No more registrations are being accepted. It was agreed that the surplus from the Networkshop would be used to further develop network information dissemination in Queensland. It was agreed by the QUESTNET members that the first week of December was seen as the most suitable week for Networkshop and that this information should be conveyed to the Computer Centre Directors (CAUDIT) who now have responsibility for the Networkshop Conference.

Action: John Noad to recommend to Computer Centre Directors that the first week of December become the traditional time for the holding of the Networkshop.

14. 1993 WINTER WORKSHOP

It was noted that the 1993 Winter Workshop has been earmarked to be held at the University of Central Queensland during the June-July University holidays (but preferably not the school holidays). Possible themes were discussed. It was suggested that a regional development focus was important and that the involvement of local industry was considered important.

Action: Alan Hayman to advise and give an overview of industry and the regional Rockhampton area to enable approaches to be made to those industries to be involved in the organising of the workshop. The formation of a Steering Committee was discussed and it was resolved that the Committee would be made up of the following: Ian Jenkins (Convenor), Geoffrey Dengate (GU), Alan Hayman (DBIRD), Alan McMeekin (USQ), Graham Rees (UQ). It was also suggested that TAFE involvement in the Organising Committee might be useful; this issue can be taken up by the Steering Committee.

Action: Geoff Dengate to advise Ian Jenkins of the formation of the Steering Committee and that planning should get underway as quickly as possible.

15. 24 HR SEVEN DAY WEEK HUB SUPPORT

This agenda item arose out of a problem that occurred in early November at the failure of the Queensland Regional Hub at Prentice. The issue is the responsibility of the Hub Organisation to act during out of hours to repair and make operational the Hub. Geoff Huston advised that the only obligation of the Regional Hubs is to respond by the next working day. Graham Rees suggested that, given the importance of the Network infrastructure, AARNet should be considering the provision of funding for a wider and more comprehensive support arrangements. At the very least, it was suggested that costs for any overtime associated with staff working out of hours to make Hubs operational should be considered by AARNet.

Action: Geoff Huston to consider cost implications for AARNet budget for widening the support provided by Regional Hubs.

Geoff Dengate raised the issue of the various name servers becoming confused when the Regional Hub or National Hubs become unoperational. Geoff Huston advises that this issue is the result of software in the various name servers and appears to be a non trivial problem. He referred members to a publication titled DNS and Bind published by O'Reilly and Associates.

16. COPYRIGHT

Library Projects

Alan Coulter tabled some correspondence and this was noted by members.

17. AARNet DIRECTORY SERVICE AND CAMPUS-WIDE INFORMATION SERVICES

Action: Alan Coulter and George Michaelson to report.

18. QUESTNET LINK RATIONALISATION

Graham Rees reported that little activity has been undertaken in recent months on this activity. To some extent the recent State Government initiatives now impact on the rationalisation of these links.

19. ELECTRICAL WORKERS LEGISLATION

The UQ documents were noted by members. Further QEC documents were drawn to the attention of members. These documents were titled "Guidelines for Electrical Workers", "Extracts from Electricity Legislation", "Safety Tag and Lock out Procedures".

20. NETWORKING FUTURES

Graham Rees and Geoff Huston, who have both been on recent international fact finding trips, verbally reported to members on their perceptions of some of the longer term options for telecommunications.

21. COMMON VOICE SERVICES PROVIDER

This agenda item had been inserted at the request of Greg Barnett. Since Mr Barnett had to leave the meeting soon after lunch and was no longer present, and because this topic had been subsumed to some extent by the State Government Networking plans, this agenda item was not discussed.

22. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Queensland Directors will be held on Friday 19 February 1993 at University of Central Queensland in Rockhampton. The meeting at UCQ would provide members the opportunity to inspect the facilities that would be used for the 1993 Winter Workshop.

The meeting closed at 4.30pm.