

## The CUA February 2006 Newsletter

Welcome to the February 2006 CUA Newsletter. The CUA Council hope that you have finally worked off the Christmas excesses as well as making the most of the most of the January sales, and are planning to benefit from your partnership with us in 2006. In this edition we look forward with an outline of future CUA events, as well as taking a closer look at the developments within the industry.

### ***CUA – A Great Start to 2006***

The CUA is pleased to report that 2006 has kicked off with an excellent start that looks to continue over the coming months. The Remote and Mobile Working Day, held in January at the Madejeski Stadium, Reading, received some excellent feedback and was seen to be of great value by attendees. All the speakers were well received and helped to enable delegates to take away a more complete understanding of this important topic. The CUA would like to take this opportunity to thank all our speakers for their contributions.

Adding to this, some members are now starting to take advantage of the various CUA promotions announced towards the end of 2005. These include the ability to bring a colleague to any one day event for 50% discount on the normal member price, as well as 20% discount for members sending delegates to two or more events in a row.

All events in 2006 have been designed and chosen in response to the wants and demands of our members, and we encourage members and non-members alike to regularly check our briefings page at [www.ibm-cua.org.uk/briefings06.htm](http://www.ibm-cua.org.uk/briefings06.htm). This is updated as soon as additional information about an event becomes available.

### ***The Spring Symposium***

In partnership with IBM the CUA are pleased to announce that the Spring Symposium will be held on the 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> of April 2006, in London. Many members of the iSeries group within IBM will be attending as well as Business Partners, so there will be plenty of opportunities to network in and around the largest dedicated iSeries Expo in the UK.

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The CUA, Arodene House, 41/55 Perth Road, Gants Hill, Ilford, Essex, IG2 6BX  
Tel 020 8518 5110, Fax 020 8518 4900, Email [office@ibm-cua.org.uk](mailto:office@ibm-cua.org.uk)

### ***The Spring Symposium (continued)***

Presentation streams will focus on the latest enhancements to development tools and system software announced in i5/os Version 5 Release 4, and how they can improve systems management, operations, and developer productivity. Web Services and SOA will also feature in the agenda, as well as 'hot topics' like Workplace and high availability.

It all promises to be an eventful two days, so please keep an eye on the CUA website for the detailed agenda and booking information. A high level of demand is expected, so you are encouraged to sign up early in order to avoid disappointment.

### ***IT – Do You Have The Complete Picture . . . ?***

When many of us started in IT some hucm . . . years ago, the IT department looked after the mainframe and all the applications on it, possibly with one or two other unrelated systems for specific functions. This allowed technical support to focus primarily on taking care of a few systems without knowing the applications in detail. If the system was OK, the business was able to operate and use the applications.

In working with different vendor and customer companies I have come to the conclusion that many individuals have regularly failed to fully recognise one of the most significant changes in IT over recent years. In my opinion contributing to many misunderstandings, deficient proposals, and probably worst of all, project overruns, whether for time or budget.

So what is this change? Simply that the ratio of applications and systems has reversed. Typically one or more applications ran on a single system, but now in this complex on-line world with increasing emphasis on continuous availability, a single application or business service can require a whole infrastructure consisting of multiple technologies and systems interlinked by various means of connectivity.

Aaah, I hear you say, that's obvious, but be honest, how many times when looking at upgrading or replacing an business service have you missed something because no-one upfront had an inventory or town plan of all the links, systems, server software, or client software that interlinked to form the solution? We all know that senior management never like surprises, so effective documentation or due diligence is key to project success. It is not something that can be left to last and eventually forgotten, even in this fast moving world of graphical screens with on-line records, and fast deployment via point and click!

***David Gyngell***

***CUA Council Member & Principal Consultant for Getronics***

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## ***Being Wireless Keeps You on the Wire***

The first time I heard someone rave about wireless, some five years ago, I just thought it was the latest industry wheeze to get people to spend more money. Quotes like "I can keep working on my monthly report while sitting on the sofa watching the football!" didn't help. It just seemed that this was a way to induce us all to take more work home. But I'm now a wireless evangelist, boring anyone who comes within five yards about the benefits of installing a wireless LAN.

Although I very rarely do 'real' work sitting on the sofa while watching a Premiership match, my wireless LAN means I can check email without going into a separate room, booting up my PC, and logging on. My wireless router is logged on at all times, so I just need to lift the lid of my notebook - or switch on my wireless PDA - and I'm online.

It's helped that broadband speeds have increased too. My narrowband dial-up connection of 56K has turned into 2Mb broadband, and that extra bandwidth means all those vital applications come flooding down the line without hesitation. If I miss the news, it means I can jump to [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) and stream the most recent programme direct to my laptop.

Despite this, I'm assured that I'm still living behind the times. For my wireless network is still only 802.11g, meaning that the signal struggles to reach my bedroom or the garden. The latest 'must-have' is a MIMO network. Quotes like 'I've watched DVDs streamed from one PC to another, and haven't dropped a connection since installation' are becoming all too common. The topic of MIMO however, will have to wait for a future article.

Still one of the most common reasons for resistance is "isn't it unsafe? People can get into my network at will." WEP security is very easy to install and will deter all but the most determined and now WPA will tighten things even more.

However, beware setting up a wireless network might not be so simple every time and can unearth a whole range of problems. Wireless is a funny combination of anticipation, pleasure and pain, not necessarily in that order.

It starts with the anticipation; all those wires you can get rid of; thoughts of putting the printer in the airing cupboard or somewhere else suitably inconspicuous; the ability to surf the Web on the laptop wherever you are, everything clean, tidy and clutter-free. It's a marketing Nirvana of healthy-living, Habitat-furniture-buying, relaxing on the sofa with a latté and your dog by your side while booking your next trip to the sun on Lastminute.com.

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### ***Being Wireless Keeps You on the Wire (continued)***

Then comes the crushing realisation that, in fact, all wireless does is remove the wires; some of them anyway. As your six-way mains adaptor fills with the plugs from routers, access points and affiliated bits and bobs, you start to appreciate that wireless actually means one less wire per device. But since the number of devices actually increases, the total wire count increases too.

And then there's the sheer unpredictability of the stuff. One minute everything is fine: the PC in the study is successfully talking to the wireless router in the hallway and you've got five big blue bars on the signal strength meter in XP SP 2's spiffy new wireless networks control panel. You place the mouse pointer over the network icon in the task bar: 'Connected at 2Mb/sec. Signal strength: excellent.'

And then it disappears. Huh? And then it pops back. Oh. And then it disappears again. Frustration is far, far too mild a term. But wait, eventually, eventually you figure it all out and it works okay.

It takes far more time, money, patience and effort than it should. But you manage to pick out the little foibles of your hardware and go through the indignity of bobbing up and down with the router then scampering back to the PC in the bedroom to see what the signal strength is like. The main thing to bear in mind is that you absolutely must upgrade the firmware of all your wireless devices if you want it to work. And unfortunately it's all much easier if everything's bought from one manufacturer, which of course shouldn't be the case.

On top of that, a huge problem with wireless access in Europe is that our houses are too solid. Pop over to the US, where the average residence is made of wood, and you'll get far fewer problems. But, the solid brick walls and iron studs over here play havoc with range. It's the reason Microsoft cites for its failure to release wireless g Media Extender devices for Media Center Edition 2005 PCs, which would allow you to access and control your videos and music from anywhere in the house. They're available in the US, but the customer return rate if they were released in this country would likely make the whole endeavour a disaster.

It's all terribly frustrating, but the pleasure, I'm happy to say, is the final part. With the possible addition of a strategic, wireless repeater your whole domestic empire can have wireless coverage. Just think, the quickest way to the recipe you want to make is simply to plonk your laptop on the microwave in the kitchen, find the recipe on the BBC food website ([www.bbc.co.uk/food](http://www.bbc.co.uk/food)) and follow it from there. See? It's worth it in the end.

**Pat Flannery**  
**CUA Treasurer**

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### ***Free Membership for a Year***

Have you or your company bought a new iSeries product or upgraded in the last 12 months? If the answer is "yes", do you have "proof of purchase" and are not currently a member of the CUA? If the answer is "yes" again, we will give your company free membership to the CUA for a year. The CUA not only offer our members informative and entertaining events held by top industry speakers, but also excellent networking opportunities, in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

This really is an opportunity for your company to be involved in our ever growing community. For more information please contact Chloe Burt on 020 8518 5110 or email her on [office@ibm-cua.org.uk](mailto:office@ibm-cua.org.uk).

### ***Call for Volunteers***

The CUA is continuing to look for any members interested in becoming Council Members, assisting in the running of events, and influencing the management and growth of the organisation. There is always plenty to do, especially as we are currently looking to construct a new development and marketing strategy.

As well as assisting with the CUA, being a Council Member will help your development of contacts within and outside of the IBM arena, and there is tremendous satisfaction when your efforts are rewarded with a successful event, or ideas for developing the CUA are accepted. In addition, after each Council Meeting we make time for a trip to the local pub in the best tradition of technology groups.

If anyone is interested but would like to learn more or meet us all first, you are welcome to join us for a drink at the end of the next Council Meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2006. Please contact the CUA office on 020 8518 5110 for more details, or email [margaret@ibm-cua.org.uk](mailto:margaret@ibm-cua.org.uk).

### ***It is Your Newsletter***

The CUA is always looking to understand and represent the views of our membership, so remember this is your Newsletter and each member is welcome to contribute to the content. If you have a burning issue or opinion that you would like to share with other members please contact the CUA office on [marketing@ibm-cua.org.uk](mailto:marketing@ibm-cua.org.uk) with an overview of the topic, or a completed article. We offer a £10 gift voucher for any articles published.

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***It is Your Newsletter (continued)***

If you feel that you would like to respond to any of the views expressed in an article published in this newsletter, another publication, or discussed at one of our events, then submit your comments via the above email address. We will give a £5 gift voucher for any comments that we print.

The CUA reserves the right to edit any articles for length or unsuitable content, and as per CUA policy, no advertising or selling is permitted.

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