

John Blackburn, arranged a Telesoftware Forum which took place at the Skyways Hotel on the 7th July, 1981.

The reason for calling this open meeting was to gain a concensus of opinion as to whether overall standards would be useful in a telesoftware environment. A further point to discuss was whetheer these standards could in fact be generated to cover the varied and diverse interests of the people invited.

The minutes of the meeting and some conclusions are attached.

Any comments or correspondence relating to these minutes should be addressed to:-

BOB COATES  
M.E.P.  
CHEVIOT HOUSE  
COACH LANE CAMPUS  
NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE

John Blackburn opened the meeting and explained that its an open meeting consisting of several interested sections of the software industry.

A list of the attendees is attached.

Description of the diverse standards existing at the present time are incompatable and diversifing.

What is required is a general standard that can be published which is agreed and can be used by everybody.

At this point the meeting was thrown open.

Peter Blower then described his system which is to be published in PC in two weeks time.

The paper is attached for reference.

Aims            1) readability  
              2) Down loading capability

David Allen

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Explained BBC's aims and informed us of test transmissions in CET format. The BBC is also using Prestel.

Basic questions are where are we going on the commercial side i.e., cost, readability and is the media or should the media supply information coded or readable.

Tim Roberts

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Stated that the UK are loosing the lead in telesoftware. The initiative is being taken by the States and others who are generating their own standards.

We should be in a position to regain the lead if we react quickly enough.

P Blower

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If the problems and potential of Teletext and Prestel are consolidated, then the resultant hibryd could be a powerful tool and result in the initiative being taken again.

Lack of standards - lack of incentive-wanting for worldwide standards.

Intelligent TV versus Home Computer we are unsure where each of these is going therefore we are unsure of the direction we should be taking.

At this point we felt it was valuable to continue and that this should be done in a more formal manner.

Ray Johnson was appointed as chairman and continued the discussion.

(Ray was taken ill and had to leave at lunch time. He has unfortunately taken his records of the proceedings with him. With a view to expediting the production of these minutes a brief review of those proceedings has been attached. This review may not be 100% accurate, but they should convey the intention).

The BBC representative stated that problems would exist with software copyright and that some form of protection or only public domain software should be used. The point of software readability was also discussed.

The ITV representative viewed the future of the intelligent TV being used as teletext receiver or with suitable software, a telesoftware receiver.

Again the problems surrounding software and public domain software were raised.

Whether software was readable or not does not matter to the end user.

At this point it was decided that each of the representatives had a different idea of what telesoftware meant.

The general opinion the definition of the word "telesoftware" is "The presentation of software at a user location to an agreed standard".

The meeting was then adjourned until after lunch.

A large number of the attendees expressed a willingness to continue with the discussion after lunch but had to leave at this point because of other commitments.

The meeting was reconvened as agreed at 2.00 p.m.

As agreed earlier in the morning session Bob Coates of MEP took over the chair and is likely to continue in this roll in the future.

The following notes were compiled by MEL Pollen and should be read as such.

A F T E R N O O N

7/7/81

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Present:		BBC Producer. Presiding Interests
J.G.	J J Gibbons	Cambridge Computer Lab Software critic!
M.P.	Mel Pullen	Acorn Telesoftware Adaptor Designer
M.H.	Martin Hayman	Practical Telesoftware P.C. Magazine
R.W.	Rod Wellburn	Commodore, Tech Services - Comms
J.B.	John Blackburn	B & B Manf. for Telesoftware/Prestel Adaptor. Beelines.
Blow	Peter Blower	Gec: provide prestel computers for B.T. asked by P.C. to review 3 formats.
N.W.	Norman Webster	Sharp Software Manager using B & B adaptor.
J.S.	James Scarlet	James York - cassette manf. BTV international education software
L.Z.	Ludric Zidek	Phillips - running Telesoft project concern about impact on set manf.
P.B.	Paul Bond	Topexpress - Software consultant to Acorn on BBC computer
B.C.	Bob Coates	Micro-electronic edu. Project (£9M)
H.H.	Herman Hauser	Director Acorn

L.Z. suggested define problems this p.m. ready for future meetings other people should be informed.

Major problems B.C (User aspects)  
(Technical aspects)

L.Z. (Transmission probably TTX or Prestel  
(Display 80 or 40 what user sees  
(Storage

L.Z. also suggests language-what doors closed.

J.S. Revenue/Protection.

R.W. suggested define/resolve objectives

H.H. use as another filing system.

L.Z. no objectives

P.B. constructive use prevent misuse not close any doors

J.G. transmission medium so simple protocol specs, not concerned as information generally.

M.P. Remote machines bootstrapped complete systems.

M.H. use as a program mort/exchange

R.W. means to sell hardware, bulletine boards, not to sell concerned with copyright. Cheap 25p programs

J.B. same as R.W. but machine independant.

Blow no user or pref interest: worldwide any languages.  
satisfy IP

N.W. same as R.W. just sell hardware so need to ensure their software can TX

J.S. want to sell software

D.A. Appls. related to broadcasting or video mixed economy free/Prestel charged as Chelsea College approach loading code that calls a machine resident run time library.

More interest in display -

P.B. suggests display depends on interpretation.

Blow try to make human readable as well program

L.Z. wants description on first page

J.G. suggests two formats machine and human readable

Blow suggests no problem with Pirating (Diverge)

D.A. directions to page and storing page

R.W. want to see compressed format or decoded format.

J.S. need protection sometimes

Blow answered protection up to IP

D.A. sometimes want to list for Pedagogical purposes.

Blow says it can be done.

L.Z. want to have both compressed and listable form

Blow any program to be executed could be listed

J.B. suggests store pages as Prestel pages

B.C. made case for readability - disagree

L.Z. said should like side by side

D.A. wants to pull in pages, end of line standard and, end of page standard, the contents of text immaterial

J.B. wants format to stay same until executed or displayed so that storage simplified.

B.C. compromise on display.  
cannot use line terminating characters in normal Text  
as all used in some program. So use some ESC  
(to be defined in a Tech committee)

L.Z. header page or part pages will be agreed by Tech. As agreed that pages can be read in compressed form

Blow Don't want two pages readable and non readable.

L.Z. two media so have diff trans methods.

Blow set a global standard for receivers of all types.

(B.C.) careful not to limit for future expansion. e.g., P.B.  
(L.Z.) allow for 8 bits in future  
Blow can define a format and says how to decode.  
can influence and will incorporate 8 bit if possible.

M.P. can have indicator saying this format

B.C. 3 p.m. finish soon so talk about storage.  
If producing black box can protect but if micro reads pages then cannot stop storage and copies.

J.S. digress - steering committee question market applications, business applications - standard must allow protection

J.B. devices to protect software.

H.H questions capability of setting standards.

L.Z. can't set standards - define input to standards setting groups.

J.B. said point us to find correct place to put pressure or provide input to

- L.Z. Bernard Rogers setting up meetings, but large companies and organisations move slowly.
- Generally all people want standard straight away.
- R.W. if another committee or group try to get them to join us.
- M.H. suggest a technical now to start up
- J.B. suggest two steering committee one tech, one marketing. Will allow period to respond suggesting Technical -
- J.G. Paul Bond M.P. Tim Roberts
- M.H. Tony Stillwell Prestel Gateway  
Peter Blower
- P.B. Ian Moffatt Gec.
- H.H. Paul Bond John Gibbons
- L.Z. self L.Z.
- Marketing: Major Manf.

Conculusion For The Day  
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JB & RW  
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- 1). The meeting was justified because of the attendance.
- 2). The meeting agreed that standards are necessary now and therefore we s hould proceed quickly to produce guidelines. The target should be three months.
- 3). It was decided that the two areas of most concern were
  - a) technical specifications and
  - b) an awareness that we are actively producing standards.
- 4). Future meetings will take place under the guidance of BOB COATES.