

❖ Consultants in Minnesota ❖

March 1998

President's Letter

by Ray J. Giske

Last Month's Meeting

A few months ago when we were considering the Year 2000 problem as a topic for one of our programs, someone suggested that it may be getting too late to have that kind of a program. If attendance at last month's ICCA meeting is any indication, **it's not too late!** The meeting was well attended, Randy Spiess from CSC did a great job of identifying the issues and providing direction on addressing the problem.

Unfortunately, it seems many smaller organizations are only beginning to address the problem. I hope you are getting ready! [ed. note] : The Y2K presentation that Mr. Spiess gave is available to ICCA members in Powerpoint format. If you want it, send me an email requesting a copy.

New Members

During the month of January, four new members were added to the chapter membership list. They include William Bailey, Michael DeWitte, Ken Koch, and Bob Seiber. We look forward to getting to know them and to their participation in the months and years ahead. It is my understanding that a brief bio on each of them will be appearing in the newsletter (if not in this issue, then in the next month or two).

Strictly Business

Those of you who attended the February meeting will recall the discussion we had

regarding the Chapter's participation in the Strictly Business show in Minneapolis this year. While it was my hope that more of the details would be available by the time I wrote this, that is not the case. Unfortunately, publication deadlines wait for no man (or woman) and, consequently, I provide you with what I know and what I believe is a pretty good chance of happening. We will provide more information in April when, hopefully, things will be firmed up. First of all, the Strictly Business conference is scheduled for Wed., May 13th and Thur., May 14th. ICCA-MN will be participating on Wed., the 13th by staffing an information table and presenting some information sessions generally related to providing information systems consulting services. (Note: It is not clear at this time whether ACM will also be part of the program, however, we do know that ASM's presentations will be on Thur. May 14th). One of the presentations is expected to consist of a panel of members (4-6) who will serve as living examples of what it's like to work in this arena. This session will likely consist of an introduction by each of the panel members (approximately 5 min. in length) to include type of work, type of organization, how long, etc. so as to provide the framework for questions from the audience. In addition, ICCA-MN chapter members will be staffing an information table promoting ICCA as well as providing information on becoming a consultant and operating a consulting business. We, of course, are looking for volunteers who will participate in either one or both of these opportunities. We will keep you posted as plans progress.

Training Opportunity

In the last issue of the newsletter, I indicated
(Continued on page 2)

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INDEPENDENT
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Newsletter
of the



Minnesota Chapter

(Continued from page 1)

that one of the goals for the chapter this year is to provide training opportunities at a discounted cost. I'm happy to say that such an opportunity has been offered by Barry Baer, Baer Wolf & Associates. Barry attended the broker fair and subsequently presented the opportunity which was discussed at the February meeting. Based on the interest expressed at the meeting, Barry has agreed to proceed with scheduling the course. The training, titled "Winning the Technical Job Assignment", is designed to provide participants with better interviewing skills. (The training is based on the assumption that credentials and experience represent only 25% of what is necessary to win a technical job assignment). It is my understanding that a limited number of seats may still be available and you may contact Barry at 486-8063 if you are still interested.

Footnotes

As we have mentioned in the past, it is very helpful for you to call in your reservation for each of the meetings. Last month, because there were several people who did not do so, we had to scramble a bit at the last minute (including setting up another table) to provide seating space for everyone. As I recall that

was also the case in January. Please contact Joan Barnes at 257-2570 with your reservation. It makes life easier for all of us.

You have no doubt by this time received your mailing from Bill Smale re: the update of the chapter directory. Please return your updated listing promptly to avoid delays in getting the new directory out. With several new members this past year, we need an updated directory as soon as possible. Don't delay in getting yours back.

New Members

Ken Koch
Business Resource Management, Inc.
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Rosemount, MN 55068
E-mail: kkoch@telepool.com

Robert Sieber
Informatika Consulting, Inc.
360 Carlson Parkway Suite 117
Minnetonka, MN 55305
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William Bailey
Software One-on-One by You and Me
2625 Park Avenue, Suite 515
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Overview of IBM's MQSeries™

By: Bob Sieber RRSieber@compuserve.com

MQSeries in one sentence: it's a middleware product from IBM that simplifies the development of distributed applications by providing asynchronous heterogeneous messaging services through a high-level API. Just think of it as E-mail for applications, sending arbitrary binary data instead of text messages. Like E-mail, the sending application doesn't worry about network topologies, network protocols, network outages, or remote system failures; it just sends the message to its peer and goes on with its work, trusting the delivery of the message to the middleware. By IBM's reckoning, this can reduce application development time by 40%.

One of the strengths of MQSeries is its broad support of operating systems, programming languages, and networks. It's

supported on just about every computing platform you can think of, including MVS (CICS, IMS, and batch), OS/400, AIX, HP-UX, Solaris, and Windows NT. Application programs may be written in C, COBOL, or PL/1. And it runs over both SNA and TCP/IP networks. This makes MQSeries an ideal mechanism for integrating diverse systems in an enterprise, which explains why major corporations are rapidly adopting it.

The main MQSeries architecture concepts are Queue Managers, Messages, and Queues. The Queue Manager is analogous to a DBMS - applications connect to a queue manager in order to send and receive messages. Although there can be multiple queue managers on a system, there is frequently only one. Queue Managers provide not only message store capability, but also store-and-forward capability, since a message may have to pass through intermediate queue managers.

Messages consist of arbitrary binary data, up to 100MB in size. Applications put messages onto queues and remove messages from queues. An application can put a message onto any queue, whether the queue resides in the local queue manager or in a remote one, but applications can only retrieve messages from local queues. Applications can designate messages as persistent or non-persistent. Delivery of persistent messages is guaranteed despite network or system failures, while non-persistent messages may be lost if failures occur. A persistent message incurs a performance penalty, since it must be held on disk by each queue manager it passes through until it's safely stored away by the next queue manager. The sending application can request to be notified when a message is received by the remote queue manager, when it's dequeued by the remote application, or if it is lost.

Queues are a fairly cheap resource. They can be statically allocated by an MQ administrator, or created on the fly by an application. Client applications will often allocate a reply queue before sending a request to a remote server application, including the reply queue address in the request message. The client application later deletes the reply queue after the reply message has been received and processed.

The application programming interface is the same on all systems. The basic primitives are: connect/disconnect to a queue manager, open/close a queue, get/set queue attributes, and queue/dequeue a message. MQSeries includes 'trigger monitor' capability, (which optionally

(Continued on page 3)

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as laws vary from state to state and also because the facts or your situation may not support

(Continued from page 2)

launches a program when a message is received; the program can be a transaction program in appropriate environments, such as CICS. MQSeries also provides for message integrity, supporting commit/rollback operations on a per-queue-manager-connection basis. This is integrated with DB2 (and VSAM) where available, so a server application (e.g., CICS transaction) can dequeue a message, update a database, and send a response message, all in one atomic unit of work! This is way cool! For the CICS environment, MQ message integrity is tied to the transaction's unit of work, while explicit commit/rollback calls are required in other environments.

An application references a target queue by a two-part address: queue manager name and queue name. Queue manager names are unique throughout the network, but queue names are only unique per queue manager. If the application does not supply a target queue manager name, the local queue manager is assumed. The system administrator can define several different kinds of routing rules, routing all messages for local queue X to queue Y on queue manager Z, for example, or routing all messages for queue manager A to queue manager B. The routing applies to both locally generated messages and those received from other queue managers.

The downside of MQSeries is in the configuration and administration. First, the administrator essentially configures all message routing statically; there is no intelligent routing as in an IP network. Configuring complicated networks can be a real bear. Second, because MQSeries runs on so many platforms, the administrator interface uses the lowest common denominator; in other words,

you enter cryptic commands at the DOS/Unix prompt (how does 'crtmqcvx' grab you?). The MVS version, however, does have a PANL-style interface. Last, there is no built-in statistical data collection/presentation. IBM relies on third-party software products for all of these functions, meaning that most MQSeries rollouts include a system integration effort. Wait a minute! For us consultants, that's the upside!

Bob Sieber is an IBM Certified MQSeries Product Specialist

Meet new member - Bob Sieber

By: Bill McTeer wmcteer@mcteersys.com

Bob Sieber became a new ICCA



member in January. Bob worked 17 years at Sperry/Unisys in Roseville, developing mainframe communications software and middleware for most of that time. He survived numerous rounds of downsizing and spent his last year at Unisys developing software for Windows NT. As he puts it: "I could see pretty quickly that NT was the future and Unisys was the past". When his request for voluntary layoff was refused ("missed out on the severance package!"), he left Unisys

anyway and started working through a consulting firm as a Windows NT contract developer for Best Buy. Two years later, he is starting out on his own, combining his experience with mission-critical software and his experience with NT. His first client is - you guessed it - Unisys, who is now developing software for the enterprise NT market.

Bob lives in Minnetonka with his fiancée, Elke Zimmermann, and his daughter Gracie, who is a miniature schnauzer. When he is not cramming for Microsoft Certification exams, he spends his free time biking, cross-country skiing, and cooking Indian food.

**Financial Planning speaker
Curt Hintzman**

By: Steven Roetzel sroetzel@isd.net

Curt Hintzman is an Investment Specialist with Norwest Investment Services, Inc. He offers financial planning for both individuals and businesses. Curt has seven years of experience in the financial services industry, most of which was with Principal Financial Securities, where he specialized in retirement planning and services for small businesses. Curt resides in Champlin, MN where he serves as Commissioner on the Planning Commission.



Meeting Reservations: Members may phone your reservation to Joan Barnes' office at 257-2570, **by 3:00 PM, Friday, March 13, 1998**. Non-members should mail this form to: ICCA Minnesota, c/o Steve Roetzel, 4428 Lakeshore Terrace, Eagan, MN 55122.

Name: _____ Company: _____
Address: _____ City: _____
State, Zip: _____ Phone: () _____

Marinated Grilled Flank Steak
Baked Stuffed Cod

- Red Ticket Members \$20 Non-members \$23 x _____ = _____
- Blue Ticket Enclosed is a check for:



Next Meeting

**Tuesday March 17
Financial Planning
Wyndham Garden Hotel**

4460 W 78th St. Circle
Bloomington, Minnesota
831-3131

Social Hour at 5:30PM
Dinner at 6:30PM

For reservations call
Joan Barnes @ 257-2570

FUTURE MEETINGS

Thursday April 16
Italian Market Deli by Lido

Thursday May 21
Wyndham Garden Hotel

Who is the new ICCA MN Chapter treasurer? Steve Roetzel.

By Don Peplinski dpeplins@pop.isd.net

Steve grew up in Worthington, MN and now resides in Eagan, MN. He attended Mankato State University where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in Computer Science with a Mathematics minor.

Immediately following college, Steve went to work for IBM in Rochester, MN. He worked at IBM for 2 ½ years in the system performance area. After leaving IBM he joined CSC Consulting where he spent the next 1 ½ years. Steve joined Don Peplinski as a business partner of Pinnacle Consulting, Inc. in July of 1996 and then became an ICCA member in March of 1997.

Steve is currently in a contract at Transport America (a national trucking firm) in Eagan. He has been at this contract for the past year working with powerbuilder 5.0 and Microsoft SQL Server 6.5. Steve's background also includes work with C++, object orientated analysis and design, 2 and 3 tier client server, and GUI development.

Steve spends his free time (what little there is)

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