

– TUG MoM Review –

The May 2002 Meeting of Members

By *Eveline Gaede*



Eveline Gaede

Toronto

... a world class city known for its theatre, its restaurants, the CN tower, and of course the best, “should-have-been-Stanley-Cup-champions” – the Toronto Maple Leafs. And for our May MoM, TUG members got to experience a little known Toronto treasure – The IBM Toronto Software Lab. The Toronto Lab is the third largest research and development facility in all of Canada, and the third largest IBM software development lab worldwide.



IBM Toronto Lab

What a great way to end another successful year of education – to spend time with the people who develop the tools and products that make the iSeries the platform that serious IT professionals turn to. Over 150 people joined us on May 22nd to tour the lab. Alison Butterill followed the tour with a presentation on some of the little known facts of the Lab. We ended the evening with Tim Alpers announcing the latest developments from IBM – the i890 and V5R2 highlights.

From its humble beginnings (the original Lab opened in 1967 with only 55 employees), the new IBM Toronto

Software Development Lab opened in March 2001, and now houses more than 2,000 employees. Of these employees, over 70% hold a degree with a major in computer science, engineering or mathematics; and over 30% hold a graduate degree! Is it any wonder that IBM Software solutions continue to dominate the IT industry?

So how do you attract and retain all this talent? Touring through the lab made it quite evident that IBM takes this very seriously. Besides having a fully equipped fitness center on site, there are game rooms and oasis rooms (an English library, a country cottage room or a South Seas Island oasis complete with a waterfall). Coffee bars and several different types of food counters are scattered through out the 4 pods. Work stations were designed for comfort, privacy and have all the latest in ergonomic lighting, desks and chairs. Employees have access to training and education and a comprehensive Skills Centre. Employees work flexible hours that are intended to fit their needs and schedules.

Some of the products that the Lab employees work on are:

- 1) Database Technology: over 550 employees work on the continuous development of DB2 Universal Database.
- 2) Application Development Technology Centre: This center is comprised of many different products (VisualAge C++, XML to name a few) and 700 employees work in this area.
- 3) Electronic Commerce Development: The focus here is on electronic commerce and the development of WebSphere Commerce Suite.
- 4) WebSphere Business Components: About 65 employees work on the WebSphere suite of products out of the Toronto lab.
- 5) User Technologies: This team focuses on ways to improve software for IBM users Worldwide.

After the tour, Alison gave a presentation that included not only the above notes, but some amazing facts that again show that IBM is not only a leader in technology and a leader in creating a creative and exciting work environment, but also a leader in designing an environmentally friendly work environment.

With 563,000 square feet of space, the Lab was built bordering the Rouge River Valley. Painstaking planning ensured that the building would protect this environment. For example, Alison explained that while the clean water that collects on the roof is drained into the ground water; the dirty water from the parking lots is drained into a special reservoir with a total of 366 linear metres of bio-swales filters before it is drained back into the ground.



Alison Butterill with friends, at the IBM Toronto Lab

The site has 4752 trees and 1440 shrubs. Of these, lab employees planted 790 trees and 720 shrubs themselves! These efforts (and many more) have earned the lab certification from the Wildlife Habitat Council. The lab's commitment to the environment has been called exceptional.



Part of the TUG crowd, touring the Amphitheatre

Now for all the trivia buffs, here are some interesting technical tidbits:

The Lab contains over 10,000 light fixtures (Anybody know any "How many Lab employees does it take to change a light bulb?" jokes?)

There is over 3.2 million feet of communication cables, 20,000 strands of fibre and 15,000 feet of cable tray.

Over 100,000 tests run on the communication network.

After a short break for some lunch, we adjourned back in the amphitheatre to listen to Tim Alpers present the April 29th iSeries Announcement. We are all aware that V5R1 was the largest development that IBM has ever undertaken, but I was surprised to hear that V5R2 is their second largest endeavor! Three key

items that Tim covered were: the i890, Enterprise IT Management, and delivering outstanding flexibility for adding new workloads. The i890, quite simply, is the mother of all computers! Can you even imagine a computer with a 32-way POWER4 processor that delivers 37,400 CPW? IBM has 30 i890's (and yes they have to pay for them as well!)

Some of the highlights of V5R2 are:

- 1) Performance at your fingertips – When you purchase an i830, i840 or i890, you purchase an initial processor configuration with 4 to 8 processors on standby. Should you need the excess processing power, you simply turn one on. You have a 14 day grace period to decide if you need it. If you decide not to purchase, they shut themselves off after the grace period. And you don't even have to take the system down.



Ron Anderson samples the buffet



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Tim Alpers

For 2003, IBM is working on a usage-only pricing model so you could take temporary advantage of the extra processing power when you need it (i.e. during peak work times). Another performance feature is intuitive iSeries Navigator (or Ops Nav) workload management tools.

- 2) Adaptive storage virtualization for high availability.
- 3) Flexible, secure management of e-business infrastructure – Under this point, falls eLiza. So just what is eLiza? eLiza is a blueprint for self-managing systems – self-protecting, self-optimizing, self-healing and self-configuring management graphical wizards. (Could the IBM CE soon be following the fate of those lonely Maytag repairmen?)

As you can see, IBM's goal is to take a complicated environment and simplify it.

Tim Alpers - bio

Tim Alpers is the product development executive responsible for the delivery of iSeries products in 2003 and 2004. Tim has 19 years of experience with IBM including hardware and software development roles on S/38 and AS/400. He has held management roles in development and business partner support areas, and has managed the development and product management of an AS/400 based application for the telecommunications industry. His previous role was the iSeries software product manager where he helped drive the V5R2 content.

The iSeries has always been the system that just seems to run itself. With each upgrade, IBM lets us focus even more and more on our core business.

This brings us to the end of another year of TUG meetings! Summer is upon us, hockey is finally over and it is time for the board to regroup and start planning for next year. I hope everyone has a safe, happy and relaxing summer. Next year promises to be another great year of networking and educational meetings! See you in September! T G

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