

# i - contact

The Internal Newsletter of IONA Technologies

So: he thought he would come, he came, he was seen, he went. Some of those who saw Big Bill in the RDS earlier this week thought the poor guy looked and sounded exhausted having given the same visionary speech 38 times already since August 24th.

"What did you do on August 24th 1995, Grandpa?" - your grandchildren may ask. The day of the biggest ever world wide software launch - maybe the day of the biggest ever marketing launch of anything.

As one wag said: Windows-95 is so easy to install, I didn't even have to take it out of its box....

Enough jest. For many PC software vendors, Windows-95 is a considerable threat. If you read the Windows-95 documentation, Microsoft will tell you that you will save about \$3,500 by deploying Windows-95 rather than Windows 3.1, since Microsoft now provide (for free) software packages which you used to have to buy separately from other vendors.

Take FTP Software Inc, a publically quoted company on Nasdaq, doing about US\$50M revenue annually. They're one company explicitly targetted by Microsoft in Windows-95, since Windows-95 has similar (network connectivity) software inside it, which you had to buy separately from a company like FTP beforehand.

The only way a large software company makes real money is by upgrades - not first time sells. Hence Windows-95 as an upgrade to Windows 3.1. Next year, expect to see Microsoft proposing Windows-NT for clients as an upgrade to Windows-95. I suspect many corporate buyers will wait for Windows-NT, and skip Windows-95...

Where does this leave us? Will our product be superceded because an equivalent product gets bundled with future Microsoft products? My own view is that yes indeed, we will see Microsoft providing distributed object technology, including cross-platform access out of Windows and into UNIX and mainframes. When? Well, within a few years. There will still be some market for a product like Orbix however, because not everyone will want to upgrade software (we do sell now in small quantities for ancient machines like Ultrix...). Some people will not want to build civilian airliners, or run a global cellular satellite telephone network, on software from Microsoft - they want industry standards and multiple vendors.

However, we gotta be realistic. Orbix is here now, and works well. Its being extended. Its being maintained. Its being integrated with third party products. But its not the last product IONA will produce. I have a few suggestions of my own, and have heard several others floating around the company, for some new gee whizz products, exploiting our foundations. If you think you have a good idea, come and chat to me over a pint.

Chris

Don't forget, i-contact is an internal newsletter. Don't show it to anybody outside the company (except showbiz agents and any of our competitors looking to head-hunt our young and amusing talent). Send all your 'stuff' (please, premium stuff only) to [tfarrell@iona.ie](mailto:tfarrell@iona.ie). i-contact hits the shelves again on October 13th. Worth waiting for.

**Orbix - it does exactly what it says on the tin**

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## Engineering News

Once again, one word describes the bulk of engineering work this month - **CORBA2** (or is that two words? Or is it six?). Suffice to say that **Paula** has declined to name any one individual as being responsible for the work for fear of 'missing someone out'. The C++ mapping is due to go into extensive testing within a week, and apparently a couple of demos are up and running already. Hats off to the boffins who made this possible.

Despite the understandable concentration on Orbix 2.0, new product continues to roll out of the door at a rate that famous pop duo Mel and Kim would describe as 'Respectable'. Take a look at this little lot:

- BNR are now happily pounding away at their VxWorks beta.
- 1.3.5 is now shipping on Solaris Sparc4. AIX will, I am assured, soon follow.
- Work continues in a host of other areas, including HP/UX releases, Orbix and Objectstore, WindowsNT, Ada, and many many more.
- I keep hearing about something called **Fred++**, but I'm completely in the dark as to what it means.

Special mention for **Colm Caffrey**, whose hard work on QNX is set to make quite an impression at the Embedded Systems Conference in San Jose. Well done Colm, you are now in the running for the 'i-contact lifetime contribution to embedded systems award'

Meanwhile, Office B are also coping with new arrivals and re-organisation, and continue to support sales and technical support with any tough queries. Support themselves are conducting a long distance relationship across the Atlantic, but, says technical guru **Alan Crilly**, they aren't complaining. "Our first loyalty is to the customer", he says, "and if that means tearing ourselves apart and never seeing **Graham Walsh** again, then so be it. Anyway, it's no great sacrifice".

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## Staff News - The Expansion Continues.

Without wanting to overuse a phrase, there is only one way to describe the recent influx of new faces - **CORBA** madness. On the up and up, this is one hot air balloon that can take all the passengers the labour market can throw at it, and why not - when coffee tastes this good, who needs caffeine? (metaphor).

So who are these new recruits? Take a sneak preview in our i-contact exclusive:

- **Ciaran McHale** and **Ronan Geraghty**, Object Technology Consultants extraordinaire, began work on 29th August on a contract basis. The current overpopulation in training means that 'hot-desking' has finally come to town. Apparently not having anywhere to sit is supposed to make people work harder.
  - Also joining in the T&C boom are **Fiona Hayes** (also an OT consultant) and **Helen Hipwell**, joining as a sales executive in professional services.
  - **Terence Cross** and **James Grimes** are the latest additions to IONA's engineering team.
  - **Marie Connolly** and **Martin O'Riordan** are now permanent members of staff.
  - **Lean Doody** is now PC product manager. **Tom Farrell** takes over events. **Laura Dillon** is set to move into Products Marketing. **John O'Toole** is helping out with admin. in marketing. It's all go!
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## My life as a Porter

(An enquiry into the seething underbelly of software migration, maintenance and lubrication.)

Deep in the bowels of IONA (in fact the little room down at the back, yes thats it, behind engineering, you know, where Justin "hey Justin, is class down again?" Mason and Ken "Cork girls rock!" Walsh reside), lies my desk. Its a "bijou" little number, nicely positioned by the window, light from the east (pleasant setting sun in the evenings!). As time passed, I made this modest workplace a home, decorating my little corner with an assortment of Frosties' plastic wrestlers, **Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers** (they're free in every pack!), tea bags, CD's, paper-cups & post-its. Sadly now the time has come to move on. My summer o' Iona has come to an end...

But before I embark on my stretch in academia, playing with flashy cameras, pondering on artificial intelligence, wondering about perception and other such things out in **Maynooth**, I figure I should fill you in on what really happens down here in porting. An expose! The porting crew, recently renamed the "**Migration & Maintenance**", take the gutsy code that is Orbix, break it, burn it, bend it over backwards and make it work on all sorts of machines. **Orbix 1.3.5 for Bendix washer/dryer 5** is sadly not ready for shipping yet, but we're thinking about it. While we don't actually write the mass of coding wizardry that is Orbix, we *\*are\** the lubricant that fits Orbix into obscure places, refreshing the parts most other orbs can't reach. (?). While working away, laughing and joking in the way that happy coders do, we also ponder over the world's oddities. Did you know for example that if you clap your hands loudly at a lizard, it'll get such a fright that it'll drop his tail right off, and scurry off leaving it behind. I was utterly amazed & fascinated by this. Clearly I don't get out much...

One of our main tasks in our role as chief **Orbix lubricators** is watching compilers compile, and machines crash. When not doing this, we like to crack jokes. Among our faves are the well worn classics:

me: "but surely if we do this, then the whole thing will work!"

Mike Reidy: "yeah, but don't call me shirley, okay?"

OR

me: "damnit there's a bug in the compiler!"

Mike Reidy: "what is it?"

me: "Oh its an automated tool for converting human written instructions into a sequence of machine readable symbols, but thats not important right now..."

...and a host of other airplane/top-secret/monty-python ditties. We're a fun kind of crowd, us. seriously! I mean like, you have to be there, you know?

So, what I'm driving at here is that, more than anything else, I've had a great time at IONA. From the very first day, coming in to find a letter from the boss, a nice care-pack (but where, oh where, was the t-shirt?) and an account already set up for me, right till now, I've been continually impressed by the attitude here. People seem to care - if you've got a problem, people get on to it right away, and see you through till it gets sorted. Thats cool, particularly when you're new and trying to fit in. Its a great working environment, certainly the best I've ever been in. So - nice one! If ever Maynooth falls into a big hole in the ground (Maynooth *\*is\** a big hole in the ground - ed.) I shall most certainly return and grovel for my old job back...(and you'll probably get it after laying it on this thick).

"Ladies and Gentlemen, we ha' something special for you here at birdlan' tonight. A new recording for Blue-Orb records, please welcome, the fathers of soul... on sax, "**Dr. Horn**" (pheeerrrpp bap bapbahhhhh)... If you please, put yo' hands togetha fo' the **toole-master** on de drums "bubbada bubbada tsh tsh tsh bom!" an' finally, if you will, on bass, the **Baker boy** "bom bom bom boom badum..."

Yes, IONA sure is one *\*funky\** setup.

Thanks a lot for a great time,

Adrian



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## Marketing News

Selling Orbix around the globe has never been so tough. Fortunately, when duty calls we can rely on the marketing department to drop sticks and head off half way around the world with the aim of stirring up a bit of CORBA madness. Just look at the evidence:

- The trip to San Francisco for Object World was a great success, and the show went quite well too. Aside from drumming up hundreds of leads, and spreading the word, **Oisin** and **Stephen** also impressed the masses with their first rate interoperability stuff.
- Not to be outdone, **SeanOS** (is he related to MacOS?), **Paul Hickey** and **Paul Lowry** headed off to Windows Solutions a week later, and also impressed with their hardwork and stamina (at the bar).
- Next week, it's the turn of **John McGuire** and **Colm Caffrey**, who set off to San Jose to the Embedded Systems Conference. It just goes to show how much of the market IONA now covers, if you'll allow me to be serious for a moment.
- **Jillian Godsil**, is working on "The CORBA Seminar", a series of one day lectures taking place over the next few months in the States. **Annrai** speaks, they pay through the nose. Marketing that must be tricky. **Ross** is making no comment on the visible theft of all his good ideas.
- PR-wise, IONA is basking in the attention of LAN Times, Wall Street Magazine and Software Magazine. And we're not talking passing mentions here - this is the full monty.

Sales are now pretty much dividing their efforts between Dublin and Boston, with the new office taking up more accounts all the time. A new system is being put into effect whereby **Mark** handles UK accounts, **Niamh** handles Telecoms, **Paul** looks after finance and does some sales visits, and **Fiona** handles Government, Manufacturing and front-line queries. Which leaves Margaret to.....hey! what does Margaret do?

## Shipping News

Over the last few weeks it has, quite literally, been a case of 'abandon shipping'. After **Lisa's** lengthy 'holiday', and a series of steamy dates with lookalike **Mel Gibson**, **Miriam** has also 'flown the coop' to set off for London. Now rumours are rife that **Laura Dillon** is set to join marketing in the near future. Still, **Cormac** holds the fort together, despite many trials and tribulations. Witness this moving letter I received just this week:

Dear i-contact,

Imagine my shock as I returned to the office after a few days off to find the cd player missing from my desk. In a well planned operation, the thieves had shipping under observation for weeks waiting for the right moment to strike. The theft was only noticed when I attempted to play a new cd and realised there was nothing attached to the other end of my headphones. After the initial shock had died away inquiries were begun, and the player was found in the possession of one **Ken Walsh** who claimed to need it for some installation or other. An unlikely story if ever I heard one. Despite the threat of impending legal action it still has not been returned and now shipping's legal advisor **Miriam Thomas**, has left to work across the pond. Now I must look to your excellent publication for help. What to do?

Cormac, a lowly shipper.

Cormac goes on to detail further thefts from shipping, namely a phone believed to have been stolen by **Suzanne Brown**. System administrators are not ruling out the possibility of 'copycat' raids as looting becomes more and more commonplace in the porting lab.

Can you help? Have you been offered a suspicious looking CD Player by **Michael Reidy** or **Ken Walsh**? Or do you think **Adrian Trenaman** took it to earn money for textbooks? Everyone in and around the porting lab is under suspicion, and that includes you, Chris.

# i - contact investigates.....

**A new series revealing the rumours behind the half lies masking the untruths.....**

## Red Menace

Rumours are rife after an unusual re-arrangement of the office space has left documentation returning to the spot they had left only weeks ago! "Madness", was the only words, or indeed word, that visibly baffled **Ross O'Crowley** could find to describe the decision. "It's CORBA madness", he repeated.

**i-contact investigates**, stunned by this strange move, went straight to the top to find out the truth. In a hush hush top level meeting with the board, it was explained that this was merely a case of "rightsizing our spatial environment" (I think **Annrai** said that), and that I was not to investigate further. I noticed that **Sean Baker** was strangely silent and refused to catch my eye.

I became increasingly puzzled when I received the following anonymous mail a few days later. I reprint it here in full :

Dear Editor,

It was the sight of CORBA hero, **Ross O'Crowley**, with several bottles of henna at the supermarket checkout, that prompted this letter.

Following instructions to 'take a holiday', and in the light of the increasingly blatant colour terrorism implemented by the "Red Commander" of Professional Services, is it any wonder that this man now fears for his job?

What started as a subtle campaign, (SOS & KK) has now reached worrying proportions with flaming new arrivals (DOS & FH). When confronted, the red despot's only defence was the ad's small print "other qualifiers may apply". Loosly translated, this reads "if you don't have red hair, then don't bother to apply"!

Yours, Outraged.

When a little snooping uncovered that this mail was sent by none other than **Ann Barry** herself, the pieces of this particularly sordid jigsaw fell into place. Why the big-wigs at

Training and Consultancy were so desperate to send documentation into exile and attempt to silence them I don't know. However, I do know that these tactics will not stop **i-contact** from uncovering the truth

Fortunately, there is a happy end to the story. I am reliably informed by a secret Australian source that **Ann** is glad to be back. "She couldn't stand those geeks", he told me.

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Next month in **i-contact**:

CORBA Madness, the **Annrai O'Toole** story

A new feature - "if I was the gaffer".

Some real training and consultancy news

Plus all your favourites!

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## Holidays R Us As IONians Soak Up The Sun

The departure of **Caroline** to sunnier climes is only the latest in a string of extravagant holidays being enjoyed by **IONA** staff over the last few months. Taking advantage of the so-called 'holiday season', employees have taken time off work to sunbathe, see the sites, and in some cases, just plain relax.

In addition, **i-contact** can exclusively reveal that some staff are receiving sinister payments for going on holiday. When I put this to the enigmatic **Orla Murphy** in accounts, she said "that's called holiday pay Tom. We're all entitled to it - even you."

Before I was able to explain that even on the best of days I didn't seem to qualify for anything that could realistically be described as 'pay', she continued "perhaps if you stopped fooling around with your phoney investigations and did some work, we wouldn't have to worry about people on their holiday".

A fine attitude! She then confessed, "actually myself and the board agreed not to give holiday pay to the staff, but it turns out to be a legal requirement". Another example of government meddling with small business. We don't want holiday pay. And we don't want taxes. We want distributed objects.

**From Idiots To Committed Orbettes** (with top correspondent Jillian Godsil)

Last week experienced members of staff (ie those here for longer than a couple of months) would have noticed a small pilgrimage to the Mecca of the main conference room. There were gathered the finest raw recruits to listen to the man who has relentlessly chased the holy grail of objects, **Mr AO'Toole**. Those looking on were very proud of the assembled group, who were willing to be labelled idiots for the purpose of bettering themselves.

The group were very keen to learn more about the very business of IONA itself. Various rumours had been circulating regarding the true meaning of objects - talk of cats and lego predominated but no-one had been able to pin down the definite meaning, and no one was prepared to go on record for this reporter, despite offers of costly bribes.

One delegate, who has previously been mistaken both for a developer and a dynamic young man (by the same geek in **ObjectWorld** who actually fancied aforementioned dynamic young man!) said afterwards that he now truly understood objects - although he was still unclear about the role of cats in the whole business. Undeterred, he stated his ultimate ambition was to be mistaken for vice president, development. The real vice-president development said confidentially this was unlikely to happen, but people had to have their dreams and it was, after all, an honourable ambition to hold.

Another delegate (who shall remain nameless due to increasing demands on his time, but he is the tall one in sales) said the course explained what he hadn't understood in a meeting the previous day. The same delegate has been seen covertly reading a heavy tome on client/server which he refuses to lend to another one else - but he says more copies are on order so the great unwashed can too learn everything. Unbeknown to this delegate, the dynamic young man staged a raid on his desk while he was at lunch and checked out the tome. And yes, he agreed, it does make a great paperweight.

So there you have it, readers. The idiots went to the well and came back **Committed Orbettes**. While the chosen ones wait for the next instalment (or Intermediate Orbix for Idiots) one common thought dominated the group. In an insightful moment, Mr AO'Toole informed his eager listeners, "Sharing code is harmless, it's not like sharing needles..." Hastily, the group binned the needles and went to check out the delights of shared code...

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**Tom Farrell Hardest Working IONA Employee, Survey Shows**

Who works the hardest? Most of us have probably asked ourselves that question, while putting our feet up with a nice cuppa and a copy of **BYTE**. Now a scientific survey, commissioned by the editors of **i-contact**, looks set to settle the issue once and for all, and promises to give accurate information on all IONA employees and how they spend their day.

The results, due out next week, are expected to cause a few raised eyebrows. The prestigious title of hardest working employee goes to Tom Farrell, who impressed researchers with his "**commitment, diligence and creativity**". Meanwhile, however, other staff members are furious with alleged comments about their working style included in the report. An embittered John Moreau claimed "**I'm accused of doing nothing but sitting at my desk typing and doing sums. Obviously this person doesn't know much about software development.**" Kevin Sullivan is furious after being accused of "**an unnatural attachment to the Sinclair Spectrum, which everyone knows is rubbish**".

Meanwhile an angry Justin Mason is considering legal action after hidden cameras caught him surfing the web for four hours solid. "I was at home at the time", he said. "This is an invasion of privacy".

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