

Editors' Corner



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AFTER THE PARCPLACE-DIGITALTALK merger, Smalltalkers could be forgiven for looking forward to a period of relative quiet and stability in the industry. Not so! In a move that further demonstrates IBM's commitment to Smalltalk, IBM acquired Object Technology International (OTI). OTI will become an independent subsidiary of IBM Canada.

IBM has been dependent on OTI technology since the introduction of its VisualAge for Smalltalk product. The product uses OTI's Smalltalk and also OTI's Envy technology for configuration management and version control. So is this acquisition good news for Smalltalk? Yes! IBM now owns the technology on which its product depends. Moreover, IBM gains access to one of the leading groups of Smalltalk researchers and innovators in the world. In partnerships with organizations like Siemens, Tektronix, Texas Instruments, and Lockheed, OTI has demonstrated that Smalltalk technology can succeed in domains from banking to embedded systems. We expect that OTI's leadership will be very influential in setting IBM's future Smalltalk strategy. As one attendee at Smalltalk Solutions put it, "Did IBM take over OTI or did Dave Thomas take over IBM?" Either way, Smalltalk is the winner!

Is there a downside to IBM's acquisition? Possibly. Many Parcplace-Digitaltalk customers, whether they use VisualWorks or Visual Smalltalk, depend on OTI's Envy/Developer technology. Although ParcPlace-Digitaltalk has announced its intention to incorporate Team/V into its merged product, many long standing clients will likely not wish to move to Team/V in the short term. Envy support will be a requirement for these folks for some time to come. In the spirit of "competition but collaboration", there seems every indication from IBM that continued Envy support will be forthcoming.

We have just returned from Smalltalk Solutions

'96 in New York City. We will be featuring reviews of the conference from David Carr in this issue and Alan Knight in the next issue, but here are a few personal observations. Attendance was up compared to last year and the conference facilities were much better. Plans are afoot for a European version of Smalltalk Solutions to be held in 1997. The use of Smalltalk is growing throughout many parts of Europe but is particularly strong and mature within the German-speaking countries.

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A "Smalltalk-Abend" or birds-of-a-feather session held during OOP '96 in Munich was attended by 320 conference attendees. We'll keep you informed as the plans for Smalltalk Solutions Europe unfold.

The sessions that attracted the biggest attention dealt with subjects like the Web (predictably), distributed object computing, and server-based computing with Smalltalk. Skip McGaughey from IBM kicked off the conference with a keynote describing the opportunities that exist for Smalltalk as we enter the world of electronic commerce. A constant theme throughout the talk was the message that "We shouldn't try to match the competition (Visual Basic, Delphi, PowerBuilder, Java, Forte) feature for feature but rather concentrate as a Smalltalk industry on delivering business value to our customers." The call for a low-end, cheap, less resource-hungry, entry-level Smalltalk was one that resonated throughout the conference. IBM, or at least Skip McGaughey, seemed to have got the message.

Finally, some good news for readers of the *Smalltalk Report*: we will be expanding the number of editorial pages in upcoming issues, which will allow us to include more product reviews, book reviews, and product news in addition to features and columns. At Smalltalk Solutions, we conducted a reader feedback survey—thanks to those of you who contributed. Expect to see some of your ideas appear in future issues.