

PDT Europe 2003

Executive Summary

of the
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PDT 2003 took place at the Manchester Conference Centre in conjunction with UMIST, Centre for Research in the Management of Projects, and University of Manchester, Department of Computer Science. The conference concluded a dozen successful and truly European PDT events. Naturally, this provides the opportunity to reflect on the past twelve years, look at the current state of PDT and try a glimpse of what its future might bring.

PDT Europe, 1992 – 2002 (the Past)

PDT Europe started in 1992 as a project sponsored by the European Commission and initiated by Prof. Horst Nowacki (Technical University, Berlin) as a communications focus for like-minded European specialists in the then emerging field of product data technologies. Management of the event was soon placed in the capable hands of Bill Mesley of Quality Marketing Services in the UK, who took over full ownership in 1997, and who has been the soul of the event until 2003.

Over its past lifecycle, the conference evolved into the leading pan-European event for the diverse aspects of product data technology in key industries. These industries included heavy weights, such as: the Automotive and Aerospace Industries; Plant / Building Design and Construction; Offshore / Petrochemicals; the emerging e-business domain and many more.

One of the conference's key characteristics was its public-private partnership concept. Sponsors included not only organisations such as the European Commission and the European Space Agency but also leading European manufactures, such as BMW, Shell and Fiat-CRF. In addition, IT companies like IBM and EDS, supported the event on various occasions. In fact, because of this concept, all key players in the field of product data technologies were provided with a place to exchange their ideas on a regular basis and over a long period of time – something not be found too often in today's technical conference field.

Participation varied but was always attractive and representing the specific nature of the conference.

From 1995 to 2002 (the time span for which data about the conference is available) more than one thousand delegates participated, with a bandwidth of annual conference attendance between 84 and 162 participants. European and international attendance was always high, peaking in 1999 when 23 countries were represented. The multi-national aspect of PDT Europe was well expressed in its Programme Committee, which on average included members from at least eight different countries and an equal number of industry disciplines.

These conferences produced an impressive array of technology and management papers, totaling more than four hundred manuscripts since 1995. All of them have been published in PDT's Conference Proceedings, which are still available today. (*Editor's note: this might well be an excellent resource for research on the history of product data technologies*).

Two other aspects seem worth sharing when looking back: The locations of PDT Europe spanned the whole continent, from Stavanger in Norway to Turin in Italy. In between they included Brussels (Belgium), Copenhagen (Denmark), London (UK), Munich (Germany), Noordwijk (The Netherlands), Paris and Sophia Antipolis (France), and Watford (UK).

PDT Europe 2003 (the Present)

Manchester in the UK was the place of PDT Europe 2003. Although attendance was not as high as in the past, the quality of the contributions and of the participants matched, and in part exceeded, the standards set in previous years. It seems the conference is opening towards the much larger picture of product technologies in context of the whole picture of people, processes organisations, markets and respective configurations.

Robert Shields (UKCeB), in his keynote, pointed towards this larger perspective of which product data technologies are a part. Today's technology projects are characterized by complexity and speed embedded in multi-organisational and cross-national structures. Increasingly there is no place for isolated views and success today is equal to the capability to collaborate flawlessly in such "chaordic" environments (*Editor's note: the term "chaordic" was first termed by Dee Hock, founder of Visa International, in his book "Birth of the Chaordic Age".*) Engineers, and in particular those concerned with infrastructures, such as product data technologies, play a vital role in bringing such projects to life.

At this year's conference 40 papers were presented. Best practices and examples of Configuration Management, in particular in the Defence Industry, were at the centre of the presentations. But additional examples from more peaceful domains also demonstrated the high sophistication that product data technologies have reached. The themes spanned from e-collaboration and portals to lifecycle management and business process enactment. But

even the more traditional themes such as CAD-features and XML were represented. In total, the bandwidth of themes and the quality of the papers gave a fairly comprehensive overview of the diversity of topics, which relate to product data.

At this conference all papers were worth listening to, but some still stood out. Among them: Anne-Marie Walters' (Schlumberger IT Services, UK) paper on "Delivering a collaborative engineering portal"; Dr. Tim King's (LSC Group, UK) paper on "Early implementation of ISO 10303-AP239 for product lifecycle support", and Dr. Andy Carpenter's (University of Manchester, UK) talk on "Model Driven Business Process Enactment". Very refreshing was a presentation by Chrysanthi Makri (a Doctoral Research Student at Cranfield University) on "PDM in the Supply Chain and the Missing Link with Customer requirements in Automotive New Product Development". The ideas expressed in the paper could lead to some novel approaches in the relationship between developers and customers.

The technical highlight of the conference may have been the presentation and demonstration of the "Baby" – The World's First Stored Program Computer. Going back in time 55 years, Chris Burton (British Computer Society, Computer Conservation Society, UK) led us back to the time when computing was still an adventure. The highlight of this experience was a visit to The Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester where a replica of the original machine is displayed. Originally designed by Professor Freddie Williams, Tom Kilburn and Geoff Tootill, the computer ran the world's first stored program at about 11:00 am on Monday, 21 June 1948. The replica was built by an enthusiastic team of volunteers, led by Chris Burton. Since June 21, 1998, it is operational again and demonstrates what computing once was. We have come a long way.



Chris Burton (British Computer Society) demonstrates "Baby" - a replica of the world's first stored programme computer

A regular and popular feature of PDT Europe is the social events, which always provide an unexpected diversion to maintain PDT Europe's unique atmosphere. This year, the social events included a "typically British" dinner at the nearby Britannia Hotel, and a dinner and guided tour of another British institution: Old Trafford - the home of Manchester United Football Club.



A traditional feature of PDT Europe: Dinner in local style - this year with a Christmas theme



Keen delegates about to enter the players' tunnel at Old Trafford, MUFC

Some of the participants also used their spare time and explored the inner city of Manchester. To their surprise, they found one of the most beautiful German Christmas markets in the area around the town hall. It seems that there are more initiatives beyond PDT, which bring Europe together. Altogether, it was a well-rounded experience of the life styles in the host city and English dinner traditions.

The conference ended with saying "Good-bye" to Bill Mesley, the heart and soul of PDT Europe for most of the past 10 years. Bill has decided to move into a new career as a Hotelier and we all wished him well in his new endeavour. To prepare him for his new life, the conference participants presented him with a survival package containing many useful items for hoteliers, among them the complete series of "Fawlty Towers" (valuable advice on how to run an hotel!) and a bottle of 1992 vintage champagne (as a reminder of the birth year of PDT).

Good luck, Bill, in your new venture!!

PDT Europe 2004 (the Future)

Sustainability has become one of the most used words in the past couple of years. Regarding PDT Europe it actually has some meaning. Helena Lindström, managing Director at Eurostep AB, together with Bill Mesley announced during the conference that the baton moves from QMS to Eurostep AB as the organisers for future PDT Europe conferences. The thirteenth conference is planned to be in Sweden and Helena has taken on the responsibility as the new focal point for oncoming conferences. Further details can be obtained directly from Helena or Eurostep (contact information below)



*Out with the old, in with the new:
Uwe Weissflog says farewell to Bill Mesley (right) and introduces the new organiser of PDT Europe, Helena Lindstrom (left), from Eurostep.*

Editor's Comment

Over the years, many of the participants in PDT Europe engaged in ongoing work relationships, some actually became friends. Since its existence, the conference provided a place to exchange knowledge. Probably more importantly, PDT Europe became a place to network, to meet old and new acquaintances and to build new technological and business relationships among European technologists and even across the Atlantic towards America. In this sense Bill Mesley and his annual PDT conference have made a contribution in building a piece of the new Europe - with a view on technology but still routed in the diversity of the old Europe.

I can only say one thing: "Thanks Bill, a job well done!"

Contact Information

For all enquiries about participation at PDT Europe 2004, contact Helena Lindstrom at Eurostep AB, in Sweden.

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Proceedings of previous PDT Europe conferences, including PDT Europe 2003 (ISBN 1 901782 09 3), can be obtained from Bill Mesley, email bill@leicesterhouse.com tel: +44 1626 773043.

A message from the organiser of PDT Europe 2003

The organising team of Bill Mesley and David Trathen record their thanks to Dr Callum Kidd and Prof Hilary Kahn for their support of, and contribution to PDT Europe 2003. Special thanks go to Uwe Weissflog for preparing papers, for charring sessions, for invaluable advice, for producing this Executive Summary, and especially for his continued support of PDT Europe.

It is with some sadness that I say goodbye to PDT Europe, as I have made many friends during my years of organisation of the conference. I take this opportunity to thank sincerely all those that have continued to support this unique event over many years. But now it's time for me to move on and pursue a new lifestyle, and I have embarked on new business challenges in the tourism industry. Organisation of PDT Europe conferences has not been without challenge or problem, and this year was no exception with its unexpected low attendance. However, the quality of presentations and calibre of attendees was at least equal to previous years, and I trust that those that did attend will gain some benefit - either technical, commercial, or personal - to have made their visit worthwhile. As an ex-employer once told me: "There is no such thing as a problem, only opportunities", and having done my best over the years to provide opportunities for presenters, exhibitors, and delegates alike, I have every confidence that the new organisers of PDT Europe will continue this objective. For this reason, I urge everyone who reads this Summary to support and attend PDT Europe 2004, and to look for a way of using the event as an opportunity to increase their technical knowledge, expand their market, and, of course, to make new friends. I wish Helena and her team every success for 2004 - and beyond.

Bill Mesley,



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