

SAN JOSE RESEARCH LABORATORY

July 17, 1961

Memorandum To: Mr. Frank J. Cummiskey  
Subject: STRETCH Users' Group Meeting

Enclosed is a letter I wrote you earlier concerning the STRETCH evaluation reports. I am sorry for the delay but I deliberately held it back until after the STRETCH Users' Group Meeting at Los Alamos July 11 and 12, 1961. Eight organizations were represented at the meeting: LASL, LRL, AWRE, MITRE, CEIR, Weather Bureau, NWL (Dahlgren), and IBM.

While there I was quite interested to talk to the people at LASL who are actually using STRETCH and get their unbiased feelings--contrasted to their official pronouncements. The users were almost uniformly happy about the machine. They feel that it is very reliable (having run as much as 17 hours without stopping without a single error), easy to use, and quite fast. At this point they are still largely debugging programs although some production work is being done. As a result, no one seems to be particularly sensitive concerning the precise speed of the machine. It is considerably faster than anything they have had to work with before, and they have not gotten to the point where they are trying to exploit the speed and feel its limitations as yet.

The main complaints I heard were concerning the unavailability for utility programs, particularly STRAP II and MCP. There was some concern about the lack of FORTRAN but this was less pronounced. At present LASL is still using their machine on a one-person-after-another basis. Most input and output is on-line. Only a few larger problems bother to load cards or print off-line on the 1401. This situation will change considerably when MCP is available. They also plan to use their SC-4020 with STRETCH later.

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The other customers and potential customers attending the Users' Group Meeting were quite impressed by the matter-of-fact way in which both LASL and IBM were using STRETCH. I am sure this did a lot to remove any doubts which they may have had concerning the "reality" of the machine. (It was interesting to note that only one of the users falls in the category of "profit-making" organization--that is, CEIR. They were very much in evidence during the meeting and seemed intent on trying to exploit the economic position which STRETCH will give them. It is too bad that our own Service Bureau Corporation did not recognize this possibility.

There was some discussion of the machine improvement program at the meeting by the customers (led by CEIR), although the IBM personnel present were under strict orders not to discuss any hardware questions. The general feeling concerning the present machine improvement program was "We want it". My opinion is that this program should not be over-emphasized because it is a psychologically bad position for IBM to admit that their original design was so poor. It would be much better to just go ahead and install the changes without fanfare in the same way other standard engineering changes are handled.

The Users agreed to form an organization but will not formalize it until the January, 1962, meeting at Livermore. Ed Voorhees of LASL will act as chairman in the meantime. Three resolutions were passed requesting: (1) that IBM send Engineering personnel to the meetings in the future, (2) that information on high speed tapes for STRETCH be released as soon as possible, and (3) that information on disks of all kinds for attachment to STRETCH be released,

H. G. Kolsky

HGK:lc

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G. W. King