

Editorial

John Mitchell

All that stands between your specialist group and its winding up are the activities of the volunteers on its Management Committee. Alex Brewer, our Chairman has resigned for reasons he explains in his column and I know that two other members, Raghu Iyer and Wal Robertson are intending to resign at the end of their stint this year. Jean Morgan stepped in as pro-tem Chairman to keep things going and Ross Palmer will now be taking the lead until next year's AGM. Things are looking a little grim as we become too thinly stretched to deliver an adequate service to you. We really do need volunteers to help out, especially in the area of forthcoming events. Come on, don't be shy. Put back in what you may have previously taken out. Contact Ross and volunteer. He can be contacted at ross.palmer@hrplc.co.uk. What's in it for you? If you need to ask, then perhaps you shouldn't volunteer. However, you get free attendance at our chargeable events and first refusal on a places that we are often offered at other conferences.

Moving on to an area of national, rather than parochial importance, the recent fire at Kings Cross which stopped north/south trains into London lead me to query the resilience of our national infrastructure. In fact, it wasn't the fire that stopped the trains from running, but the need to evacuate a nearby signal box. Now, if you needed to evacuate your data centre I suspect the powers that be would be pretty upset if your BCP was unable to deliver an adequate service. But this is exactly what happened with Network Rail. After all this was only an interruption and it bought travel chaos. What would have happened if the signal box itself had been totally destroyed? So, I start tracking down who should be asking the awkward questions. First to NISCC (National Infrastructure Security Co-ordination Centre) where the Deputy Director informs me that it not their bailiwick. "No, we deal with electronic security, not hardware". "But surely the signalling stuff is electronic". "Sorry, ask the Department of Transport". So I email the Secretary of State for Transport. Now the Right Honourable Douglas Alexander MP must be a very busy man (or perhaps stuck on a train), because neither he nor his minions cared to respond. After several attempts I emailed Tony Blair with a query as to what exactly I have to do to get a response from his Secretary for State? Hey presto, I get an email from a minion who says that the signally failure is a Network Rail problem! Doooh! "No, Secretary of State, the national transport infrastructure is your responsibility". You and not me should be asking why Network Rail does not have an adequate BCP. So get out of your car and raise merry hell with them.

Which brings me to another area where I believe that we are being failed by the people we pay to run the country. The recent CPS report on its investigation into the death of Jean Charles de Menezes at the hands of a police firearms unit noted that "a log book of events was submitted for forensic examination to see if it had been altered and, if so, by whom. Two experts examined the relevant passage but they could not agree to the required standard whether there had been an alteration or, if there had been one, who may have done it. This meant there could be no prosecution of any individual in relation to the log book". Ignoring for the moment the bizarre use of Health & Safety legislation in the case of someone who was shot to death, the altering of a log book is a clear indication that police officers are not above committing a serious criminal offence. The Crown Prosecution Service may not have sufficient evidence to proceed with a case, but the fact remains that an official record may have been tampered with. At best this is forgery and at worse a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, instigated by the very people responsible for upholding the law. The Police Complaints Commission and the CPS should be ashamed that they cannot effectively investigate a crime committed in their own back yard. What is wrong in using three experts and then taking the majority view? That's the way the Space Shuttle's computers are designed.

Academic integrity, or lack of it, has been aired in this column previously, but I was reminded on it again when I received a call for paper for a security symposium. It all looked fine until I got to the submission requirements. "For an accepted submission to be included in the proceedings and scheduled for presentation at the symposium: (1) a final version that responds to reviewers' comments and conforms to the specified format must be submitted by the final-version deadline, and (2) at least one of the authors must register to the symposium by the early-registration deadline". Requirement (2) is the killer. If you want your paper to be considered for publication you have to agree to pay to attend the conference. So you may have an excellent paper, but if you can't afford to fly to Spain, stay at a hotel and pay the conference fee, then tough luck, it doesn't even get considered. This means that money talks louder than academic integrity. Come along you academics. Make a stand and stamp out this unethical behaviour.

Finally, big brother is watching you as you travel around the London Transport system. If you have registered for an Oyster card, or have topped one up with your credit card, then they know who you are and where you have been. I noticed that the application form for the Oyster card does not follow the guidelines for Data Protection in that you cannot opt out from them contacting you for "administration, customer service & research". Secondly, their contacting you about "related products or services" is a default "opt in" when it should be a default "opt out". No response from TfL yet on my queries on this (well, its only been a month and their response SLA is), but another researcher was

more successful regarding the number of times that information has been disclosed to the police. "Between August 2004 and March 2006 TfL's Information Access and Compliance Team received 436 requests from the police for Oyster card information. Of these, 409 requests were granted and the data was released to the police. Please note that before September 2005, some requests may have been received and answered without detailed statistical information being recorded". The researcher then asked how many of these requests were as a result of a court order. The answer was none. So my advice is to buy your Oyster card from a retailer and pay cash.

In this edition I welcome Brian Runicman who has taken over the "BCS Matters!" column from Colin Thomson. Mark Smith has provided his usual helpful list of members' benefits which shows the value for money you receive from your membership subscription. Alan Calder and Steve Watkins bring us up to date on ISO 27001, while David Cuthbertson suggests some quick wins for IT Management Teams.

Don't forget to volunteer for the Management Committee..