Virtual CICS user group: Newsletter 14

Welcome to the Virtual CICS user group newsletter. The Virtual CICS user group at www.fundi.com/virtualcics is an independently-operated vendor-neutral site run by and for the CICS user community.

Virtual CICS user group presentation

The latest webinar from the Virtual CICS user group was entitled, “Integrating Life-Comm, Life/70, or other CICS resident insurance and annuity applications with distributed applications utilizing the ACORD standard”, and was presented by James Alexander, Director of Technical Services at HostBridge Technology.

James has over 22 years of experience in mainframe systems programming and managing large IT organizations. He is currently responsible for IT services and HostBridge product support. Prior to joining HostBridge, James was head of information technology services for Oklahoma State University where he set direction for IT services – including network operations – and oversaw integration of disparate technologies into uniform business solutions.

James Alexander started the presentation saying that he would be looking at precision integration for legacy applications in the insurance industry.

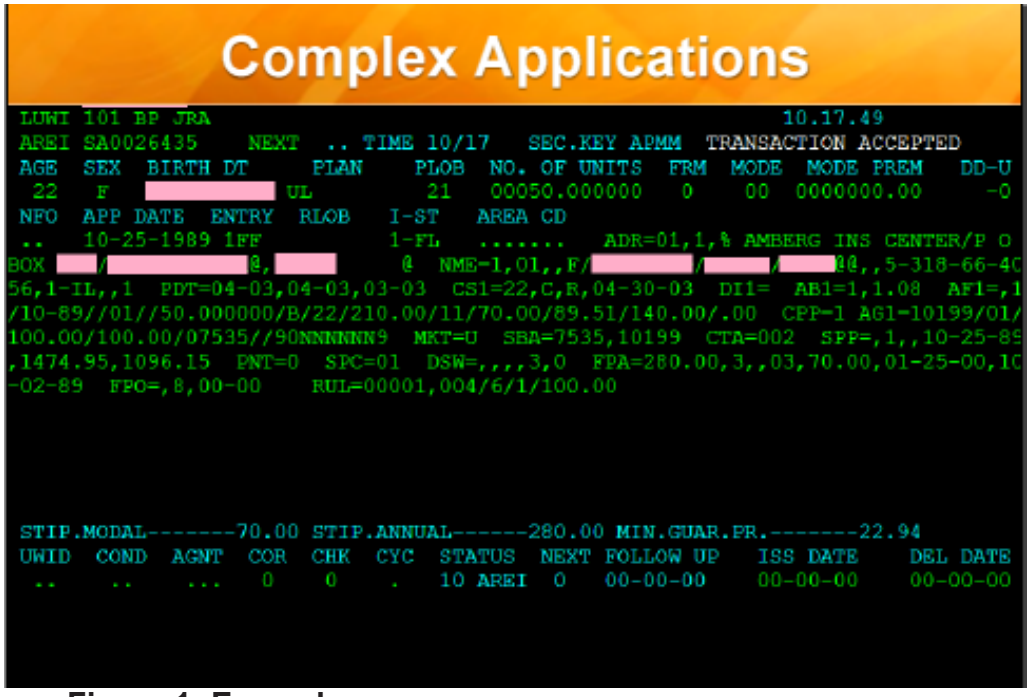

Figure 1: Example screen

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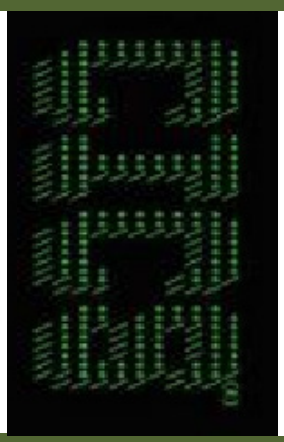

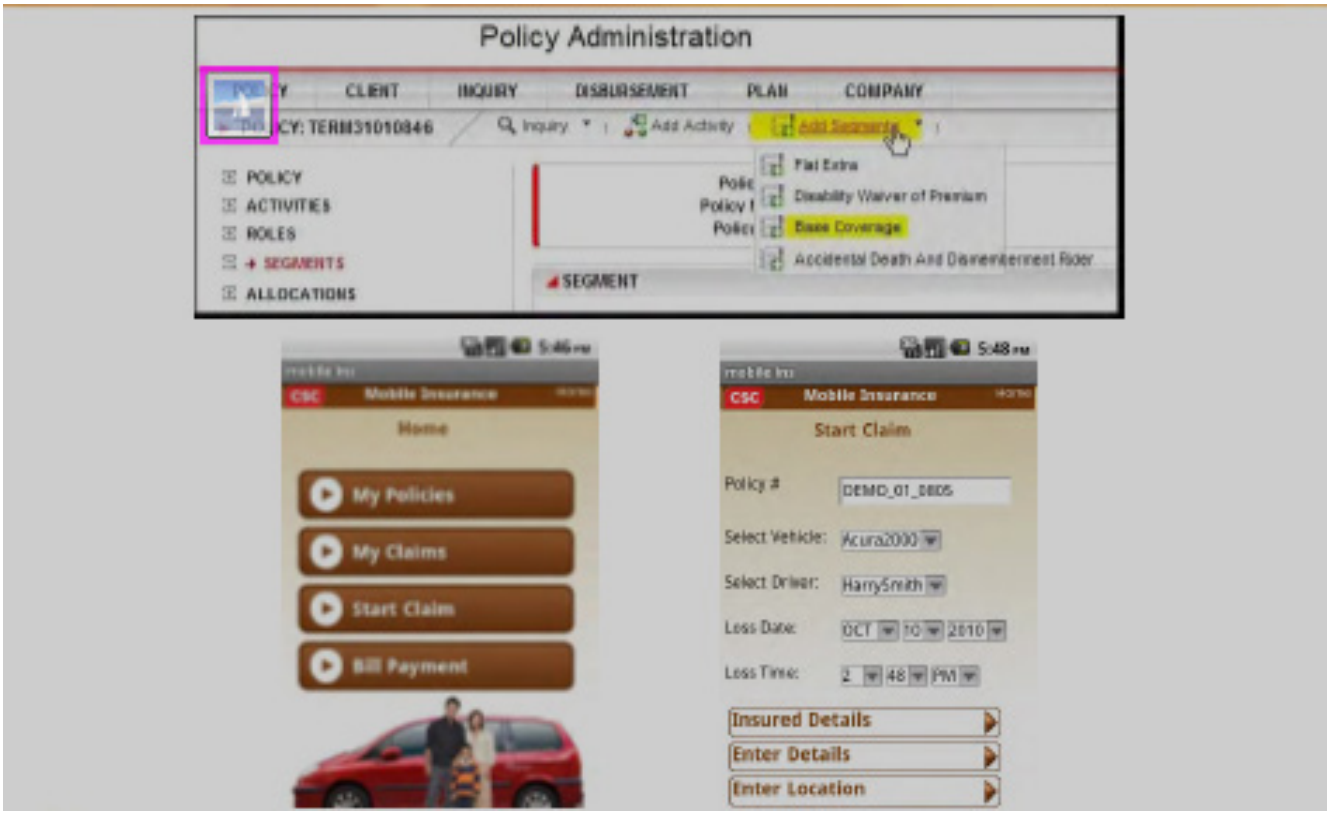

Figure 2: Using new media

The problem that the insurance industry faces is that it has lots of legacy applications, 10s of millions invested, and needs to use new media and interfaces.

Figure 1 illustrates an example screen. Because it is so complex to understand, users need to undergo long periods of training. Other organizations have similarly complex screens.

These days, people want and expect to use new media (see Figure 2).

The kinds of legacy application that insurance companies are using include LifeComm, Life70, Cyberlife, Life M, Vantage, Ingenium, and many more. Examples of new media include AWD, customer service, Accelerator, Insurance Policy, Administration, SAP for Insurance.

ACORD (Association for Cooperative Operations Research and Development) is a global, non-profit organization serving the insurance and related industries.

ACORD facilitates the development of open consensus data standards and standard forms, and works with its members and partner organizations to drive the implementation of those standards.

Now, while it seems like a great idea to have a single standard, the ACORD object model runs to a 4000 page PDF document, or 22,000 lines of XSD. But what it does allow is for those clunky old screens to be reproduced as modern-looking, browser-based interfaces.

The goals of this integration are to make no changes to the legacy applications, security, audit, or logging, while at the same time using HTTP, SOAP, and Web services to produce something that's scalable, reliable, and performs well, is easy to implement, and fast to deploy.

Hostbridge's integration

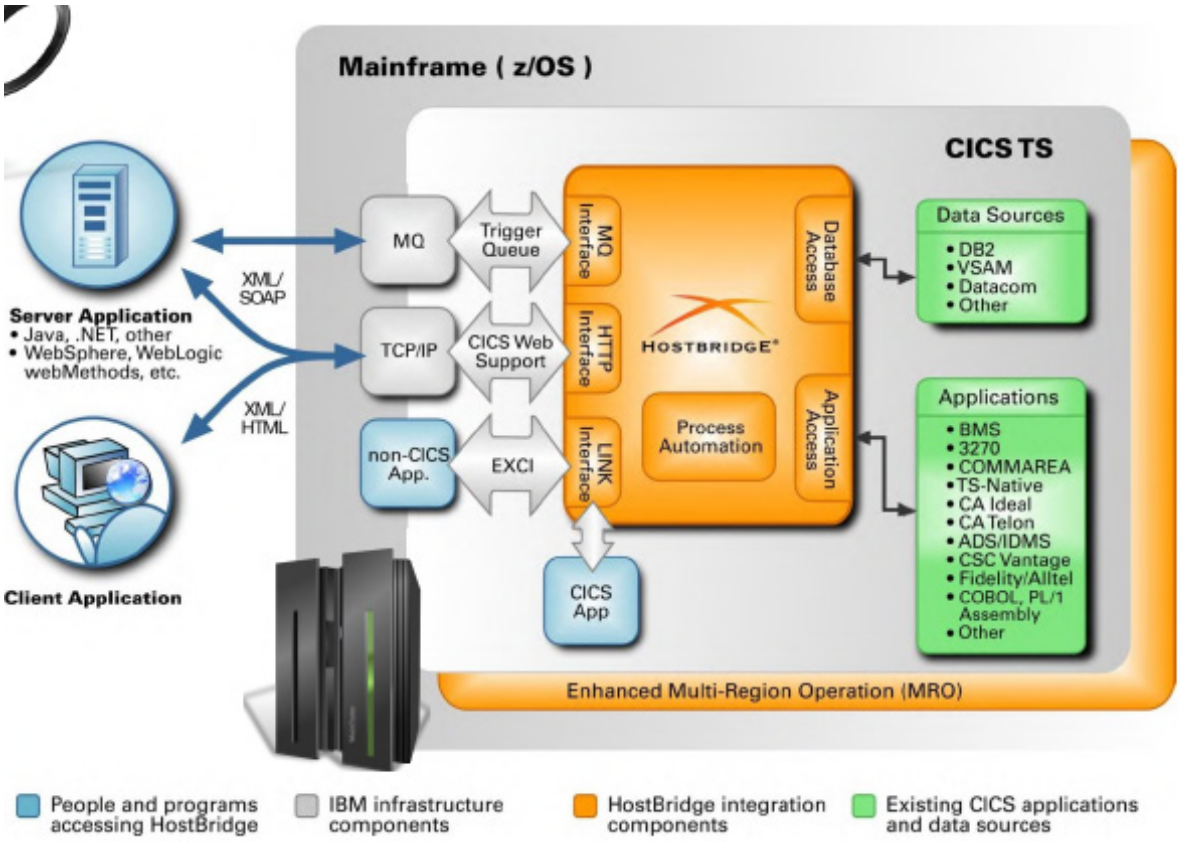

Figure 3: Integration architecture

architecture is shown in Figure 3.

A copy of James Alexander's presentation is available for download from the Virtual CICS user group Web site at www.fundi.com/virtualcics/presentations/ACORDMay13.pdf.

You can see and hear the whole user group meeting by downloading the WMV file from www.fundi.com/virtualims/presentations/2013-05-14meeting.wmv.

Meeting dates

The following meeting dates have been arranged for the Virtual CICS user group:

- On 9 July we have a presentation introduced by Danny Mace, CICS Director at IBM on "Extracting optimum performance out of CICS". With successive releases of CICS TS providing improved function to enable more applications to run Threadsafe, many CICS sites have Threadsafe projects in plan. This session explains how some of the IBM CICS Tools can help with these projects. With greater capacity available through significant vertical and horizontal scalability enhancements in CICS TS v5.1 many organisations are considering CICS region consolidation. This session also discusses how CICS Tools can facilitate CICS region consolidation.
- On 10 September we'll be hearing from Matter of Fact Software's Stephen Mitchell on Creating modern CICS Web applications by exploiting open source Javascript libraries.

We will be using Citrix GoToMeeting for the user group meetings.

Recent CICS articles

How CICS Helps Eliminate the Batch Window by Mark Cocker and Daniel Millwood in *Enterprise Tech Journal* (May/June 2013). You can find the article at http://enterprisesystemsmedia.com/article/how-cics-helps-eliminate-the-batch-window.

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CICS 101: Resource Definition Online by Phyllis Donofrio in *Enterprise Tech Journal* (May/June 2013). You can find the article at http://enterprisesystemsmedia.com/article/cics-101-resource-definition-online.

CICS news

HostBridge Technology has released HostBridge Version 6.62, which helps organizations increase efficiency and service agility when using CICS, CICS socket applications, and DB2 in enterprise integration. Improvements include: tighter integration between HostBridge Socket Support and HBz (HostBridge for zIIP) server. Replacing CICS Socket Support (EZASOKET) with HostBridge Socket Support shift MIPS to specialty engines, cutting general processor MIPS consumption, and reducing mainframe TCO. Full details can be found at http://www.hostbridge.com/index.php/news/news/press20100908.

IBM has announced the IBM Enterprise COBOL for z/OS V5.1 compiler, which works with the latest versions of CICS, IMS, and DB2. Expected to be available later this quarter, the new software: provides support for Java 7, new UTF-8 built-ins, debugging enhancements, and support for unbounded tables and groups; supports a new level of z/OS SMF tracking, which allows users who implement sub-capacity tracking to reduce their administrative overhead; Improves control over XML documents with the z/OS XML parser, allowing parsing workload to be off loaded to specialty engines to reduce operating costs. Full details can be found at http://www-01.ibm.com/support/docview.wss?uid=swg21633234&aid=1.

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IBM has announced CICS TS for z/OS Value Unit Edition (VUE) V5.1, which offers a one-time-charge (OTC) price metric for eligible workloads that are deployed in qualified System z New Application License Charge (zNALC) logical partitions (LPARs). CICS TS VUE offers the following benefits for eligible workloads: an OTC licensing option for CICS TS V5.1, with subscription and support; deployment to zNALC LPARs, which delivers a reduced price for the z/OS operating system; the ability for new CICS TS VUE V5 workloads to federate with existing CICS TS V3, CICS TS V4, and CICS TS V5 workloads; and a licence that does not initiate any SVC period for any other monthly licence charge (MLC) versions of CICS TS. Full details can be found at http://www-01.ibm.com/common/ssi/cgi-bin/ssialias?infotype=an&subtype=ca&supplier=897&letternum=ENUS213-168

About the Virtual CICS user group

The Virtual CICS user group was established as a way for individuals using IBM's CICS TS systems to exchange information, learn new techniques, and advance their skills with the product.

The Web site at www.fundi.com/virtualcics provides a central point for coordinating periodic meetings (which contain technically-oriented topics presented in a webinar format), and provides articles, discussions, links, and other resources of interest to IBM CICS practitioners. Anyone with an interest in CICS is welcome to join the Virtual CICS user group and share in the knowledge exchange.

To share ideas, and for further information, contact trevor@itech-ed.com.

The Virtual CICS user group is free to its members.