

Visit to Samoa 7-14 March 1998

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SOPAC Trip Report 256

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PURPOSE

Visit Apia Observatory (Meteorology Division)

- Provide necessary upgrades and repairs as requested.
- Provide forward plan for Information System with relevant project proposals
- Provide training as requested
- Provide assistance in operation of Clicom
- Investigate status baseline GIS data

Visit South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

- Discuss status and direction of SPREP Data MIS

Visit Computer Services Ltd (CSL)

- Discuss ISP direction in a regional context

Visit Department of Lands, Surveys & Environment

- Investigate status baseline GIS data

Visit Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- Advise task details

Visit Telecom Samoa

- Installation of gateway and upgrade link speed

General

- Advise on areas of mutual cooperation
- Promote SOPAC's role in Samoa

METEOROLOGY DIVISION

Background

Prior visits:

- Nov 93 Followup to delivery of phase 1 of EU funded equipment
- Jul 94 Upgrade proposal for network Observatory and Water Authority.
- Dec 94 Followup to delivery phase 2. Install network
- May 96 Further upgrade network
- Apr 97 Upgrade assistance and rebuild hardware at SOPAC.

The tasks undertaken this visit included:

- Restoration of network
- Training in network operation and maintenance
- Restoration of Qfax software for downloading images.
- Setup of Clicom to have common database accessed by two computers.
- Installation of Internet access
- In cooperation with CSL (Samoa.net) commence process for display of satellite images and weather forecasts on a Weather page(s).
- Other assistance as requested

See Attachment A for brief network description and operation manual, report and recommendations with covering letter.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS, SURVEYS AND ENVIRONMENT

Meeting with Leo'o Polutea, Senior Photogrammetrist. There have been no additions to baseline data and new computer equipment needed urgently as the performance of their only GIS desktop makes MapInfo operations unfeasible. There will be forthcoming assistance in GIS (and GPS?) training by an Australian company during the next 6 weeks. At Leo's request installed copy MapInfo 4.5 for 16-bit (they were running Windows 3.11) that interestingly is MapInfo 4.1. Therefore no further development in 16-bit since 1986.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Vito Lui out of the country. Telecon with Sharon Potoi re “ws” domain name. Recommended that Foreign Affairs retain ownership and that Telecom Samoa be responsible for the administration. Provided copy of documents and covering letter to be passed to Vito Lui on leaving.

EUROPEAN UNION

Met with Peter Hughes, Resident Counsellor socially. Advised him of misunderstanding in Brussels caused by misinformation by Australia and informed him of SOPAC activities in Samoa. He indicated that there was a possibility of SOPAC being involved in the EU funded water program in Savaii.

PROMOTION

Interviewed on SOPAC's work in Samoa on Friday 13 March by Samoa Television. Highlighted the Savaii Water Assessment, upgrading of information dissemination through Samoa.net at the Meteorology Division and the installation of the Internet gateway. Noted the proactive decision by Telecom Samoa to provide services to enable two or more commercial ISP's to operate in order that cost-effective services would be available to end users. Something that Telecom Fiji was not doing!

SPREP

Contacted Herve Dropsy who advised that the SPREP Corporate Database was installed and users were happy. This database was designed by Richard Sheehan, an Australian software company specialising in MS Access and SQL Server, and programmed and deployed by SOPAC with 2-weeks training. Two copies of the SPREP report on the Regional IT Strategies Meeting in April 1997 were provided to Franck Martin. This report of an annual event appears to have taken some 11 months to produce. Fortunately SOPAC published and distributed the report 2 months after the meeting.

Shared taxi with James Aston on return from Nadi to Suva and he identified a weakness in the SPREP Corporate Database design process where the designer visited SPREP, asked staff what they wanted and specified the design accordingly. The result is a database with too many features and may prove too complex to produce benefits. James correctly pointed out that there should have been a revisit with a brief explanation of the full product to determine it met the user's needs. It is very likely that SPREP will request SOPAC to make major revisions to this database.

INTERNET SERVICES

The first Internet Service Provider (ISP) was set up in 1996 by Pacific Internet and was a vehicle to implement a gambling scheme that was connected to commercial rugby (Super League) but could have been expanded in other gambling areas. The ISP domain name was published as TALOFA.NET but registered as SUPER12.NET and described as a “Rugby ISP” in Australia. The person who set up the system was Bruce Edwards (a partner in Pacific Internet) who I contacted during visit in 1996 and his reticence in discussing the system is now explained. It is understood that the service was set up to test the reliability of operating an ISP in Samoa while at the same time the relevant authorities were approached to explore implementing an offshore gambling via Internet scheme. Presumably to minimise taxes.

The “business” side of the ISP was never fully implemented, as it was understood that neither the users were consistently billed nor the provider consistently paid. It is further understood that Pacific Internet was not granted their gambling via Internet approval and the equipment and system was abandoned. It is estimated that the investment in TALOFA.NET would have been some USD 20k in equipment and USD 100,000 in staff costs and to write off that amount should provide an indication of the anticipated profit of Internet gambling.

The ISP was therefore non-sustainable after being abandoned and Telecom Samoa was therefore left with no choice but to repossess the equipment in lieu of unpaid bills in excess of WST 200,000 and identify a company to continue operation. They selected CSL a commercial company owned by shareholders like the National Provident Fund, to be the operator and leased them the equipment repossessed from TALOFA.NET.

CSL formed SAMOA.NET and produced a new pricing structure that was not favourably received with prices doubling to 11 Tala per hour and Telecom Samoa perceived an urgent need to encourage a second ISP to become operational who would provide competition. This second ISP is named

something like LESA.NET after the first name of the owner who operates a commercial telecom company installing lines and equipment.

Note the Samoa.net settings

Primary	139.130.204.47
Secondary DNS	139.130.4.5
POP3 mail host	mail.samoa.net
SMTP mail host	mail.samoa.net
Web server	www.samoa.net
Dialin number	25300

In order to provide a second ISP, Telecom Samoa had to set up a gateway service to allow multiple ISPs to connect to the international link and contacted SOPAC following Telecommunications Governance Workshop when the case of FIG as a regional model was promoted. Telecom Samoa was provided a detailed equipment list and schematics on setting up a gateway service for a maximum of three ISP's. It should be noted that Telecom Samoa had no intention of operating a commercial ISP themselves.

Telecom Samoa (Nerony Lam Sam) then explored options with SOPAC for installing the gateway and subsequently contracted SOPAC to assist with the installation and provide training to Telecom Samoa staff as well as staff from the two ISP's.

The gateway was setup during the week commencing Monday 9 March and was operational 5:00am Thursday morning after a 12-hour switchover period. The switch-over was planned for 4 hours but problems were encountered that included delays by Telstra (the Australian end) publishing the new router tables and the hardware cabling (V35) between the gateway router and Nokia mux that connected to the earth station. The cable problems were incorrect gender plugs and incorrectly supplied wiring diagrams. Telstra again.

Attempts to upgrade the link from 64 kbps to 128 kbps were unsuccessful and it is expected that the V35 cable will have to be replaced by X21.

The upgrades and tests were managed by Franck Martin and achieved through an impressive team effort of Telecom Samoa and CSL staff.

It was interesting to note that Bruce Edwards was contracted by Lesa to set up their ISP and arrived on a flight from American Samoa shortly before the switchover. After being brought to the switch room by Lesa, Bruce challenged Franck Martin's authority to be setting up the gateway. This was noted by Telecom Samoa engineers who advised Nerony Lam Sam who in turn advised the Attorney General in order that Bruce Edwards's passport be held until the monies owed Telecom Samoa by Pacific Internet were recovered.

Norony Lam Sam will be exploring further consulting by SOPAC.

SUMMARY

- Network at Observatory restored and Internet access available with uploading of satellite images to Samoa.net operational.
- SPREP Corporate Database deployed and training provided by Franck Martin over a two week period. SPREP likely to request further work.
- Telecom Samoa Internet gateway installed and training provided during 1 week period by Franck Martin. Telecom Samoa likely to request further work.

CONTACTS

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ATTACHMENT A

13 March 1998

Our ref: Samoa - IT Assistance

Mr Ausetalia Titimaea
Assistant Director Meteorology
Meteorology Division
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Meteorology
PO Box 3020
Apia
Samoa

Dear Ause

Following a visit to your division from Monday 9 to Friday 13 March, please find attached following documents.

- User's manual
- Activity report and recommendations

These documents have been stored under the read only directory \\server\doc as Manual.doc and Report.doc respectively.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further assistance and please note that I will endeavour to visit for a further week within the next three months to complete the several outstanding tasks.

Yours sincerely

Leslie Allinson
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cc. Mr Vitolio Lui
Deputy Secretary for Foreign Affairs
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