



Jeffrey Wix 1949–2009

Jeff Wix, long-time colleague and supporter of BuildingSMART, died suddenly in Norway in July. He played a key role in the development of the IFC standard.

Jeff Wix was born in Nottingham in 1949, an only child and the first in his family to go on to tertiary education. He studied mechanical engineering at Newcastle Polytechnic, as it then was, and his early employment was with Haden Young and SJ Farmer, a building services company. He moved on to consulting engineers Gary Worthington in Blackpool. During a hospital survey carried out by Gary Worthington personnel, he used divining rods which, he claimed, enabled him to locate the water pipes. BIM technology, which he helped develop, happily rendered this application of divining rods obsolete!

By the late 1970s, he was working for BDP in Preston, where he led the development of engineering co-ordination techniques in major hospital and public health projects. It was at BDP that he first wrote software for use by others on a project in 1978 and became involved in CAD.

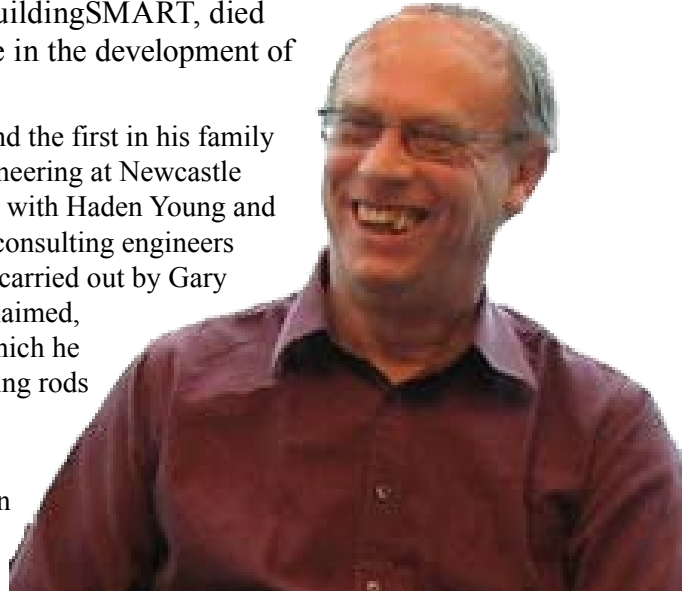
His journey home from work by car was along a congested route, and he often preferred to stay late in the office to avoid the rush hour, using the time to hone his skills in computing. This expertise paid off in his next employment, with BSRIA (Building Services Research and Information Association) in Bracknell, where he worked in R&D. He set up the BSRIA Computer Centre and was responsible for the *Computer Centre Magazine*.

Now, with a track record of both practical engineering and R&D, Jeff started a consultancy with a BSRIA colleague, Colin McClelland. Wix McClelland developed a CAD layering system for building services, known as Building Services Environment or BSE – an unfortunate designation, he admitted, in the era of mad cow disease. The partnership ended in 1994, with the enterprise taken over by Estimation in Birmingham, and Jeff decided to go it alone.

Shortly afterwards, he became involved with the fledgling International Alliance for Interoperability, as BuildingSMART was then called. He was IAI UK's first technical co-ordinator when the UK chapter was set up in 1996, a position he held for over a decade. With his creative input, the new IFC standard for interoperable data exchange was created, as the Industry Foundation Classes were defined in a series of releases.

Jeff participated in a number of high-profile projects that implemented IFC. He helped develop the Corenet ePlan Check system in Singapore: a pioneering IFC-enabled system for checking planning applications swiftly and seamlessly. In Norway, he worked on the Akershus Hospital project – notable for the use of IFC on a major project – and developed the exchange requirement for HEVAC, electrical and piping systems for use in the Information Delivery Manual. This was an important step in complementing the IFC standard with a further information delivery standard.

Jeff was one of a tiny handful of experts in his field. He found himself in demand around the world: in the Philippines, developing models for road information and management; in Singapore, working on feasibility studies for the Construction Industry Development Board; in the US, collaborating – among other activities – with a major public sector contracting organisation; in the UK,



A great visionary having unbounded positive energy and always with time for new ideas.

I do not think we can say enough about Jeff's open and friendly personality nor overstate the impact of his passionate work in the building modelling industry.

Our community has lost a kind man and a pioneer and visionary who never tired of advancing the practice of design and construction for everybody's good.



sorting out the documentation problems of the new British Library; and with BuildingSMART UK and International, leading the development of the IFC 2x Model and serving as a member of the Model Support Group, among numerous activities. In 2006, he was recognised by the US National Institute for Building Sciences for his contribution to the development of IFC and related technologies.

‘It was Jeff who introduced me to object technology, the basis of BIM, back in the mid-80s,’ says Chris Groome, business manager of BuildingSMART. ‘Even at that time he had a vision for the construction and facilities management industries which he was to pursue unswervingly for the rest of his

life. The hallmarks of his work were rigour and depth of thought, high output, persistence, enjoyment, and loyalty to the cause and to colleagues.’

‘Jeff was a friend to me and to so many colleagues in the construction industry worldwide,’ says Nick Nisbet, Jeff’s colleague at AEC3 and BuildingSMART UK’s technical co-ordinator. ‘Business was secondary; if it wasn’t going to be fun, he wouldn’t do it.’ And Mark Bew, chairman of BuildingSMART UK, adds, ‘Jeff was unique to the industry, crossing the divide between theory and delivery. We need Jeff Wix: he will be sorely missed by his family, friends and the industry at large.’

From the late 1990s Jeff also worked in partnership with German architect and IFC expert Thomas Liebich and an American colleague, Jim Forester, who together founded AEC3. Jeff and Thomas later renamed their own enterprises AEC3 UK and AEC3 DE and altogether their collaboration lasted for over 15 years until Jeff’s death.

He also made a significant contribution to CAD, IFC and BIM through his work on committees. In his Wix McClelland days, he had helped further the progress of CAD layering through a National Economic Development Office committee, which included rising stars of the construction IT revolution. Later he worked on, and chaired, committees at BSI and ISO involved in setting standards. He made his expertise available to a series of EU projects, from an early technical collaborative project under the SPRINT programme in the 1980s to the STAND-INN project in 2006/08. He was part of the public face of BIM and IFC and did much to promote uptake, from regular appearances at conferences to his activities as visiting professor at Salford University and running masterclasses for postgraduate students.

Jeff was enthusiastic in his work and highly dedicated, but he was always a family man. In 1971, he married Jan Stevenson and together they had three children of whom he was immensely proud and three grand children. He was a convivial man who made colleagues his friends. He is remembered by a former colleague as ‘immensely friendly, always interesting’. His early death is widely felt in the industry and by the many who crossed his path.

Jeff was a great guy who contributed immensely to our Industry

A wonderful, incredibly knowledgeable and respected man

He really did make a difference in the lives and careers of so many

This tribute was produced by BuildingSMART UK in December 2009.

Thanks are made to Jan Wix for providing the background to this tribute and to Beryl Garcka, Nick Nisbet and Chris Groome for their input. Other sources include: Charles Egbu, *Obituary*, School of the Built Environment, University of Salford; Thomas Liebich, AEC3 DE. The quotations were taken from the eulogy at Jeff Wix’s funeral.

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