

# RAVENSBOURNE REGISTRARS REGISTER GROWTH IN PRIVATISATION SHARE MARKET

*Assistant director Carl Targett is responsible for all the data processing functions at Ravensbourne Registration Services.*



The rocketing growth of public company flotations on the stock market has led to a corresponding growth in the need for high-speed computerised data capture to handle share applications from members of the public hoping to share in the success of British companies. Share registrar organisations set up to manage share ownership lists and new share applications are constantly seeking ways to increase their ability to handle the data capture, on computer, of the often hand-written information on the share application forms received from the public.

Ravensbourne Registration Services, based in Beckenham, Kent, is expanding its data capture facility within its computer operations department in line with the growth of a number of its business activities, including share applications for new issues. It is using ROCC multiuser computers to keep more work inhouse, thereby maintaining greater control over the quality, validity and scheduling of dp work.

The result is that Ravensbourne has expanded its business considerably in the last five years to its current level (with a staff of 500 in 1987) and aims to double its turnover in the next five years. Established in 1962 as a share registrar, Ravensbourne Registration Services has expanded its business activities into other areas needing data capture such as managing registers of PAYE charity donations for the Charities Aid Foundation, and the administration of membership lists for such clients as The National Trust and English Heritage.

Other growth areas include controlled bulk mailings for clients from their existing mailing lists and data capture for organisations wishing to concentrate on the central aspects of their businesses while passing data capture and list management to an external specialist, such as Ravensbourne.

At the core of Ravensbourne's ability to fuel its growth success is its computer operations department supplying the work feeding the hungry ROCC data capture and data preparation computers and its ICL 2900 and 3900 mainframes linked with six high-speed printers.

"The core activity of computer operations is the creation and maintenance of databases," said David Short, computer operations manager. "Work normally follows its way through our four sections of Data Preparation, Data Control, Mainframe Processing and Bulk Mail."

Taking the work involved in processing share applications for a stock market flotation as an example, he explained how work flows through his department. This is exemplified by Ravensbourne's participation in the dp work for the British Gas flotation, for which it processed 1.25 million applications.

"First the application forms go to data prep for capturing data on the ROCC computer, keyed in by seven operators," Short said. "During the British Gas flotation we commissioned other bureaux to help, leaving us to coordinate and validate the work here. When possible, we prefer to use other data capture bureaux which also use ROCC equipment. We find that in our experience the systems compatibility helps achieve cleaner data needing less verification and new jobs are easier to set up on ROCC computers."

Next, work progresses through data control which produces job sheets to track the work through the entire dp process including



*Ravensbourne's data capture staff yielded 312m key depressions in 1987 from the work they did for The Charities Aid Foundation 'Give As You Earn' programme. Pictured seated with her staff is dp supervisor Kathryn Gillen.*

instructions to the mainframe operations and mailing room.

At the end of each day, the ROCC-created data is transferred to magnetic tape for processing in batch form overnight on the ICL mainframes. The bulk mail section then becomes involved in the controlled mailings resulting from the work. This may mean posting the acknowledgements of share applications to the applicants or perhaps a membership renewal reminder for a membership list client.

In peak periods, Ravensbourne's data capture staff each achieve 11,000 key depressions per hour, yielding on average 160m key depressions per annum as of last year. Work for The Charities Aid

Foundation 'Give As You Earn' programme yielded 312m key depressions in 1987.

"With the acquisition of the increased efficiency and speed of data prep offered by our new ROCC 2805 computer, we believe that Ravensbourne is able to handle in house a much larger proportion of share application work for future flotations," Short said.

"Controlling the flow of the millions of application forms during a new issue is complicated enough without the additional organisational responsibility of coordinating the movement of millions of bits of paper between data capture bureaux," he added. During the British Gas flotation we were moving up to 150,000 applications daily!"

Ravensbourne is also expanding to meet further customer demands for data preparation.

"There is a trend for companies to rely upon specialist data capture bureaux for dp work, enabling them to concentrate on their core business activities," Short added. Ravensbourne's increased dp speed, efficiency – and security – afforded by expanded inhouse computer operations, means it is in a very healthy position to succeed in a more intensive participation in new issue flotations and other dp tasks. This gives it a competitive edge in its ability to serve the voracious dp needs of the British stock market while enabling it to expand its business activities to service other dp needs of existing and new customers with other dp requirements.



*Short... "Controlling the flow of the millions of application forms is complicated enough."*