

Author

Mike Gilmore

Senior Partner of The Cabling Partnership (www.it-cabling.com)
Managing Director of e-Ready Building Limited
P.O.Box MT65, Leeds, United Kingdom. LS17 8YD.
e-mail: mike.gilmore@btinternet.com
Telephone: +44 (0) 113 232 3721, Fax: +44 (0) 113 293 2632

See last page for biographical details



The IT cabling infrastructure
division of
e-Ready Building Limited

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e-Ready Building Limited
Next generation IT infrastructures

TIA-B AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX

by
**Mike Gilmore, Technical Director of the FIA
for Networking+ (August 2007)**

Since its inception, the Fibreoptic Industry Association (FIA) has held the position that it should only provide direct support for matters within the scope of the fibre optics industry. It has repeatedly avoided straying into areas covered by other industry associations and trade bodies. The recent demise of CITA (Communications and Information Technology Association) - formerly the UK TIA - has forced a review of this long-standing position.

Such a review is inevitable since the telecommunications infrastructure industry has been supported by, in no particular order, the FIA, CITA and the Electrical Contractors Association via their Information Technology, Electronics and Control group (ECA-ITEC). Removing one of the elements of the triumvirate suggests that either a new group has to fill the gap or the existing bodies have to make some changes to cover the shortfall.

There is significant membership overlap between these organisations. Somewhat surprisingly CITA had the smallest membership but almost 20% of CITA members were also FIA members. Other may have been ECA-ITEC members. It is true that not all CITA members were directly involved in infrastructure - a number were telecommunications equipment or service suppliers and these may find a new home elsewhere, possibly within the CMA. However, many CITA members are consultants and installers of telecommunication infrastructures. The FIA has therefore decided to make a landmark move to support those disenfranchised organisations.

The FIA propose to host an organisation called the TIA-B (Telecommunications Infrastructure Advisory Board). Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the TIA-B will address all telecommunications media and specifically include the areas that CITA used to address (e.g. balanced cabling). The TIA-B will be primarily a technical body that will directly benefit from the historic commitment to, and substantial sponsorship of, international, European and UK standardisation activities across all telecommunications media by the FIA via its Technical Directorate.

The objective of the TIA-B is:

- to allow information from the FIA standards commitment to be presented to a wider audience and to cover a wider range of telecommunications technologies;
- to support FIA members who wish the quality of technical support documentation, query resolution and arbitration/audit services already provided by the FIA to its core technology to be extended to all telecommunications infrastructure cabling media;
- to produce technical services including BSI-endorsed publications to support the "copper" cabling infrastructure sector;
- allow services already offered by the FIA and to be extended to cover all telecommunications infrastructure cabling media.

The management structure of the TIA-B is already in place. Any member of a TIA-B host is automatically a member of TIA-B. An inaugural TIA-B meeting will be held in September.

It is vital for the FIA to forge stronger links with the electrotechnical area. This is entirely in line with the general desire of the infrastructure community to reduce the number of trade associations to which they have to turn for advice. As a result, an offer has recently been made by the FIA to the ECA-ITEC to co-host the TIA-B and we await their response, hopefully by the end of this year. Such co-hosts will undoubtedly add value to the services offered by the TIA-B.

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Company Registration No. 4432595 Registered Office - Emery House, 192 Heaton Moor Road, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 4DU.

The FIA is offering free membership for ex-CITA members until January 2008 at which point they will be offered membership of the FIA at the same fee structure as existing FIA members. We feel that this offer is appropriate since CITA members may have already paid their annual fees and a 6-month waiver of further trade association fees to join the TIA-B is fair and reasonable.

Further information is available via the FIA web-site at www.fia-online.co.uk or directly via the TIA-B section at www.fia-online.co.uk/TIA-B. Enquiries can be e-mailed to jane@fiasec.demon.co.uk or, alternatively, you can contact the FIA Secretariat in 01763 273039.

Biography

As the Technical and Standards Director of the UK Fibreoptic Industry Association, Mike is heavily involved in the development of training and competence standards for the fibre installation industry and sets down policy in this area. In addition he chairs the audit and arbitration committees for the FIA. His book "Fibre optic cabling; theory design and installation practice" published in 1991 remains a reference for both experts and entrants into this field.

In the UK, Mike is Chairman of TCT7/7, the BSI technical committee responsible for the three panels on telecommunication cabling. He also chairs two of these panels (TCT7/-/1 and TCT7/-/3). TCT7/-/1 acts to assist development of European and international standards for telecommunications cabling. TCT7/-/3 manages the implementation of European standards and others in the UK.

At the European level Mike is Convenor of CENELEC TC215 Working Group 1, the group that controls the development of European standards for the design and installation of telecommunications cabling.

At international level, Mike is Convenor of the Cabling Implementation Task Group (CITG) within ISO/IEC JTC1 SC25 WG3. This group is responsible for the strategic management of the international standards covering the specification, QA, installation, administration, operation, maintenance and repair of generic cabling. This work supports all the cabling design standards produced by ISO/IEC JTC1 SC25 WG3 including ISO/IEC 11801 and ISO/IEC 24702 for industrial premises produced by ISO/IEC JTC1 SC25 WG3 IPTG (also convened by Mike Gilmore).

Mike is a regular speaker at seminars and conferences in all five continents. He has provided the keynote address and opening presentation in many conferences in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. His seminars, providing regular updates on the progression of cabling standards are particularly well attended and are operating in the UK and continental Europe.



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