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## **Sandia's Network for Supercomputer '96: Linking Supercomputers in a Wide Area Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM) Network**

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# **Sandia's Network for Supercomputer '96: Linking Supercomputers in a Wide Area Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM) Network**

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## **Abstract**

The advanced networking department at Sandia National Laboratories has used the annual Supercomputing conference sponsored by the IEEE and ACM for the past several years as a forum to demonstrate and focus communication and networking developments. At *Supercomputing 96*, for the first time, Sandia National Laboratories, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory combined their *Supercomputing 96* activities within a single research booth under the ASCI banner. Sandia provided the network design and coordinated the networking activities within the booth. At *Supercomputing 96*, Sandia elected: to demonstrate wide area network connected Massively Parallel Processors, to demonstrate the functionality and capability of Sandia's new edge architecture, to demonstrate inter-continental collaboration tools, and to demonstrate ATM video capabilities. This paper documents those accomplishments, discusses the details of their implementation, and describes how these demonstrations supports Sandia's overall strategies in ATM networking.

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## 1 Introduction

The advanced networking department at Sandia National Laboratories has used the annual Supercomputing conference sponsored by the IEEE and ACM for the past several years as a forum to demonstrate and focus communication and networking developments. The string of participation began in Minneapolis at the 1992 conference with a demonstration of the prototype Switched Multi-megabit Data and Synchronous Optical Network (SONET) technology that Sandia was intending to use in its consolidation of their supercomputers [1]. As a direct result of this participation, the National Information Infrastructure Testbed (NIIT) was born. At 1993 conference, in Portland, Sandia focused on the interoperability of emerging ATM technology and its efficacy in providing high quality video and multimedia capability [3]. This conference resulted in an early pilot of a interconnection of the three DOE Defense Program (DP) National Laboratories over a capable wide area network. The need for this type of network has continued to expand and current efforts in this arena include the DOE Laboratories Secure Network project. In Washington the following year, the three Labs once again were connected over Sandia's extension of its production networks to the conference's trade show floor [7]. At the 95 conference in San Diego, Sandia demonstrated, in collaboration with Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), Intel, and Gigaset, a three node 622 megabit per second ATM interconnected Paragon network on the conference floor [8].

In all cases the significant contributions of Sandia's technical partners made the results possible and added significantly to the accomplishments.

Some common themes and benefits at each of the conferences have been:

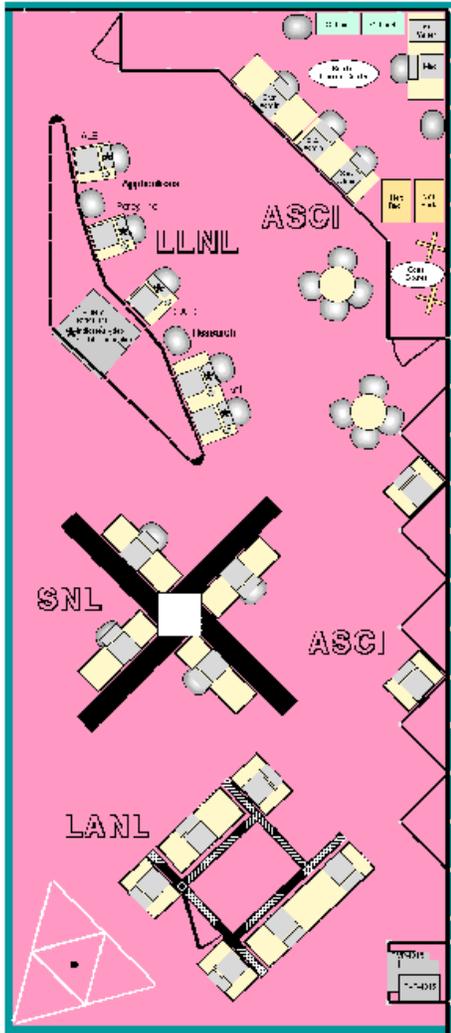
- partnering with industry to gain early access to new technology,
- focusing current projects and activities through by preparing challenging demonstrations,
- engendering new and evolving partnerships with industry, academia, and the other government labs and agencies,
- discovering and establishing new partnering opportunities,
- highlighting the synergy that results from the tight coupling of networking and communication technologies and organizations,
- providing a stage to professionally interact with colleagues and associates from other organizations in order to challenge and validate our current thinking.

For *Supercomputing 96* in Pittsburgh Sandia built on the success of *Supercomputing 95* along with the preceding ATM efforts to build a wide area network between the show floor and large supercomputing platforms at Sandia in New Mexico, ORNL in Tennessee, and the Pittsburgh Supercomputer Center. An material science application was run across this configuration. The result won a High Performance Computing Challenge gold medal. This paper documents those accomplishments, discusses the details of their implementation, and describes how these demonstrations supports Sandia's overall

strategies in ATM networking [4,5,6. Additionally, it describes the construction of a network to support the DOE DP National Laboratories at the conference.

## **2 SUPERCOMPUTING 96 Networks**

At *SuperComputing 96*, for the first time in conference history, the three DP Laboratories put together a single integrated research booth. The three Laboratories, Sandia National Laboratories, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory teamed under the Advance Strategic Computing Initiative (ASCI) rubric. While all the laboratories contributed equipment and personnel to the effort, Sandia was selected to lead the effort to provide the communication network needed to support the booth demonstrations.



/home/users/tvw/chu/frame/SC-96\_booth

January 16, 1997 8:59 am

Figure 1: ASCII Booth Layout

### 3 Network Design

The network design goal was to create a flexible environment that allowed the on site networking personnel to meet initial requirements while accommodating late changes. The initial requirements collect from the Labs were:

Los Alamos National Laboratories (LANL)	Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL)	Sandia National Laboratories (SNL)
24 IP addresses all Ethernet	10 IP address 6 Ethernet and up to 4 FDDI	10 IP addresses 9 Ethernet and 2 ATM
Internet Access Via SCINET <sup>1</sup>	Internet Access Via SCINET	Internet access via SCINET
2 machines must be located on the ASCI wall		Access to Pittsburgh Supercomputer Center and G-Waat network via SCINET

**Table 1: Supercomputing 96 Networking Requirements**

Based on these initial requirements it was decided that the primary service offering would mirror Sandia's latest edge communication architecture. This architecture provided high density switch Ethernet, 10BASE-T, commodity ports to the users. It also contained the ability to integrate FDDI and ATM physical ports. A router was included in the design to provide the users within the booth isolation from problems that have tended to crop up in the past with the show network (SCINET). The connection to SCINET would provide access to FDDI, ATM and Ethernet. The FDDI connection was the primary data connection. The Ethernet connection was used to provide a backup connection should SCINET's FDDI network break. The ATM connection connected the ATM interfaces within the booth to the show network. FDDI was chosen as the commodity connection due to the nature of the show's historic ATM services. The show's ATM network is typically populated by demonstrations that are early development efforts. These demos have the ability and the need to pass large data sets around the show floor. This need coupled with the lack of flow control in ATM tends to make the show's ATM network less reliable than its FDDI network.

A Fore Systems switch was selected for the booth because a joint SNL and Fore Systems demonstration was planned for the show. By using the Fore Switch we insured easy interconnectivity with our partner.

As the conference date neared, as expected, some changes to the preliminary network design were required due to the changes in the requirements of the exhibitors. The primary change was the drop of all the FDDI requirements by the LLNL and LANL exhibitors. The other change was a requirement for a 10base-2, ThinNet, connection for the SNL exhibitors. This requirement was satisfied by the addition of a 10base-2 Ethernet bridge. During the conference, SNL exhibitors requested an additional two ATM connections to support a video demonstration. The request could only partially be met

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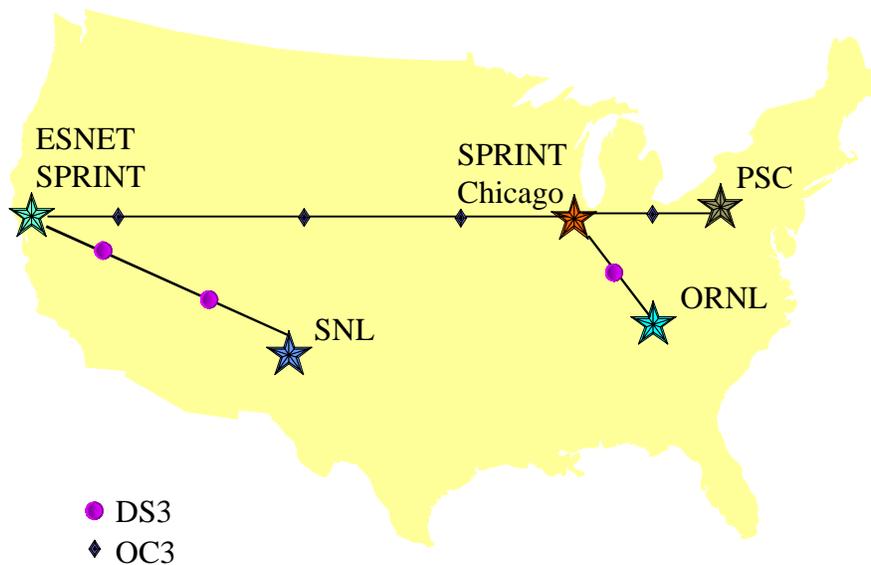
<sup>1</sup> SCINET is the high performance network built each year by volunteers for the supercomputing conference



that contained 12 10base-T connections. The SNL section had two multimode optical fiber pair to support the ATM requirements. In addition to providing the required cabling an extra multimode optical fiber pair was provided to accommodate any late interconnection requirements. The ASCI Wall section was supported by four individual 10base-T cables. LANL also ran an addition five individual 10base-T cables into the LANL section as a additional contingency.

## 4 Wide Area Network

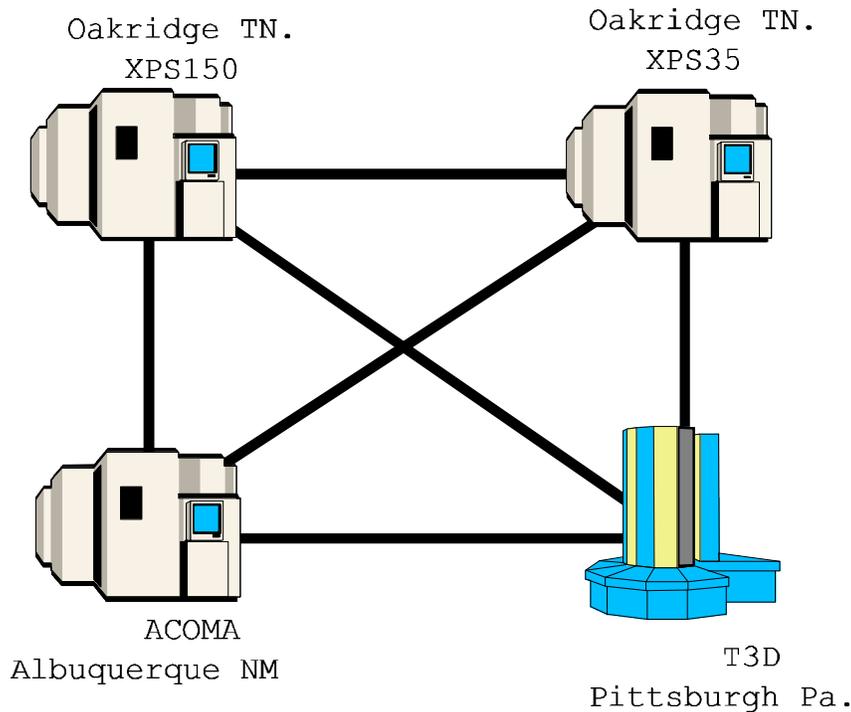
At *Supercomputing 96* SNL, ORNL, and PSC teamed to do a wide area supercomputing demonstration where the largest massively parallel supercomputers available at each site were connected together to solve a single problem. The ground work for this demonstration was laid at *Supercomputing 95* when a small scale version of the demonstration was done on the exhibit floor. That demo used smaller, portable versions of the Intel Paragon supercomputers [8]. The supercomputers involved in this year's demonstration were scattered across the United States, in New Mexico, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania, and consisted of Sandia's 140 gigaflop 1842 processing node, Paragon named Acoma, Oak Ridge's 150 gigaflop, 1157 processing node, Paragon named XPS150, Oak Ridge's 35 gigaflop, 548 node Paragon named XPS35, and the PSC's T3D. DOE Energy Science network, ESNET, provided the wide area networking infrastructure. The material science code that was run was a first principles Copper-Nickel alloy code<sup>2</sup>.



<sup>2</sup> To get more information on the application see the web page: <http://www.ccs.ornl.gov/GC/materials/MShome.html>

**Figure 3: Network to Support WAN Supercomputing**

The ATM network, see figure 3, that the demonstration used was build using permanent virtual circuits (PVCs). Six PVCs were used to create a mesh, see Figure 4, that interconnected the machines. The lowest speed section within the network was a DS3, 44.763 MHz, link provided by ESNET. The highest speed links in the network were the 622 megabits per second OC-12 local connections to the Paragons. The Intel Paragons in the demonstration were connected to the ATM network via Giganet's ATM Protocol Acceleration Engine [8]. The T3D was connected via a Hippi channel that attach to an SGI workstation. The SGI then attached to the ATM network. The message passing protocol running across the machines was a version of Parallel Virtual Machine (PVM). PVM used native ATM adaptation Layer 5 (AAL5) as its transport protocol.



**Figure 4: Logical Mesh Interconnect**

## 5 Building the connectivity

ESNET has provided IP services to ORNL and SNL since its inception. During the fiscal year 1996 ESNET was updating its backbones to ATM. ORNL's ATM connectivity was completed in August 1996. Sandia connection to ESNET was upgraded to ATM in October 1996. PSC connection to ESNET was not put into place until the *Supercomputing 96* SCINET network was built in November. The network running between SNL and ORNL had a round-trip latency that was measured as 106 milliseconds. About half the latency in the link can be attributed to the speed of light. The rest of the network's latency can be attributed to the network equipment electronic processing times. The wide area network consisted of a link from New Mexico, with drops at Sandia

National Laboratories and Los Alamos National Laboratories, to ESNET's California terminal, a link from the California terminal to Sprint's Chicago Terminal, and from Chicago two links, one to ORNL in Tennessee and one to PSC in Pennsylvania. The route through the West Coast added about 2000 miles to the network distance between the sites.

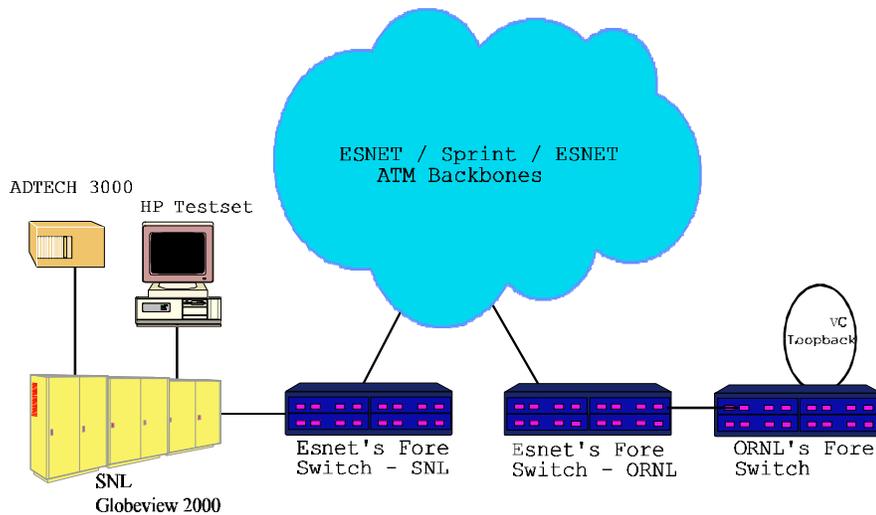
## **6 Congestion Control**

Because the application traffic would compete for bandwidth with the ESNET production backbone traffic a method was needed to ensure that the combination of demonstration traffic and the production traffic wouldn't cause unacceptable network congestion. Originally, ESNET attempted to protect their backbone networks using a policing parameter on the Fore System switches. During testing of the network it was discovered that the Fore switch failed to maintain the policing contract, thereby dropping traffic even when it met the established policing criteria. The result was the switch dropped application data even at a data rate less than what the policing setup allowed. This was an expected finding because Sandia had seen this same effect during earlier switch testing in Sandia's ATM Testbed. Through negotiation with ESNET an agreement was reached that allowed the application to have full access to the network. The agreement relied on the ability of the application to control the amount of data it transmitted over a given period of time. The agreement called for the application to not exceed a rate of 20 megabits per second as measured over any 100 milliseconds of time. The 20 megabit per second amounted to about one half of the usable bandwidth on the slowest speed link on the network. The application was capable of limiting data transmission through its flow control methods. The application flow control was based on the handshake that the application was doing to achieve reliable data delivery. To meet the traffic level that were agreed upon, the application would burst out four 32,768 byte data packets. It would then wait for a positive acknowledgment from the data receiver before sending another data packet. This application flow control is similar to a TCP sliding window implementation. While this method doesn't ensure that the network wouldn't get congested, it did ensure that the additional traffic that the application would insert onto the network wouldn't congest the network to the point that production services would suffer.

## **7 Testing the Network**

To ensure that ESNET was able to successfully absorb and pass the agreed upon data rate and data bursts a network throughput test suite was established. The test suite was designed to mimic the worst case allowed by the negotiated agreement. Test traffic was sent into ESNET in a way that ESNET network technicians could monitor the effect of on their network. ESNET was interested in the effects of the testing to verify that the agreed upon traffic level didn't cause ESNET's production traffic to become sluggish. The test allowed ESNET to prove that they could successfully pass the application data a large

percentage of the time. The test was monitored to verify that our test traffic was not being dropped within the ESNET network. Figure 5 shows the testing setup.



**Figure 5: Network Test Setup**

Actually two tests were designed. Test 1 verified ESNET's ability to reliably deliver the promised data rate over a long period of time. A Hewlett Packard Broadband Test System used was as the data generator and data monitor. Additional data monitoring was provided by the diagnostic capabilities of Sandia's internal Globeview 2000's<sup>3</sup> core ATM switch. The test passed a large AAL5 data packet that was shaped by the HP test set to a 20 megabit data stream that was non-bursty in nature. It was during this testing that it was discovered that the policing parameter within the ESNET network was not operating correctly. The testing indicated that ESNET with the policing parameter turned on could only successfully deliver about 10 megabit per second of the shaped data through the network. By sharing this test data with ESNET we were able to negotiate with ESNET to remove the policing from the network. Once the policing was removed the shaped 20 megabit per second traffic pattern was successfully passed through the network. We ran this traffic pattern into ESNET for long periods of time, from one hour to four hours, over several days. Only once during the testing period did the test produce dropped data. The amount of data lost during this time was less than one percent of the data transmitted. Another good indication from the testing was that ESNET didn't receive any reports of sluggish network response during this testing.

Test 2 was designed to mimic the nature of the application data traffic pattern. This traffic pattern consisted of bursts of data being passed onto the network. The addition of an

<sup>3</sup> A Globeview 2000 is a high performance ATM switch manufactured by Lucent Technologies.

ADTECH 3000 ATM data generator was added to enhance the test ability to manipulate the data burst patterns. The HP test set and the Globeview 2000 were still used to monitor the success of the test. The goal of this test was to pass a burst of 131,072 bytes of data into ESNET and have the data successfully returned through the loopback. Early results showed that this test failed nearly one hundred percent of the time. When the data bursts were reduced to the size of 5000 bytes, then ESNET successfully delivered the data. ESNET technicians were notified and they together with SPRINT technicians tried to find the congest network link. Sandia assisted the search by providing a known test load that allowed the technicians to quickly find the link where the congestion was taking place. The bursty nature of IP traffic combine with the way TCP responses to congestion presents difficulty in discovering network congestion. Typically, the TCPIP protocol will back away from congestion in a way that actually lowers the amount of traffic that passes over a link. Although, the actual traffic passed over a given period is reduced the congested nature of the link will reappear as the TCP/IP back-off algorithm runs its course. In short the link was congested but the network monitoring equipment registered that the data traffic was getting smaller. By adding a controlled background load to the IP traffic running across the network allowed the ESNET and Sprint's technical staff to more quickly discover the congestion points in the network. Sprint took action once the congestion point was discovered by rerouting the test traffic into an uncongested link.

## **8 Testing the Application**

A lot of effort was put into characterizing the communication capability of PVM and the communication requirements of the application. Testing at ORNL showed that the peak sustained communication rate that the current version of PVM could achieve was 20 megabytes per seconds. The material science application's mode of operation consisted of a compute cycle followed by a communication cycle. The application would compute for 20 seconds than exchange the computed data by communicating via PVM. In a local environment with an OC12 link between two supercomputer the communication cycle lasted 2 seconds with about 52 megabytes of data passing between the machines, 26 megabytes in each direction. The results of this testing indicated that the application running over the distributed network that consisted of a 20 megabits per second data circuit would result in a 20 second compute cycle, followed by a 10 second communication cycle. This indicated to the application programmer that a problem twice the size could be solved on the distributed system in about 1.36 of the amount of time.

To ensure that the application ran successfully in the distributed environment, a large scale version, running on more than 500 parallel compute nodes, of the application needed to be successfully run on individual platforms at SNL, PSC, and ORNL. This was a important undertaking because all of the machines and the all of the computing environments at each sites varied greatly. PSC's hardware and operating system was supplied by Cray. Even the machines at ORNL and SNL although both Intel Paragons had different hardware being used for the compute nodes. The production operating system at each sites was different. ORNL used a released version of Intel OSF operating system on both the

compute nodes and the service nodes. At SNL an internally developed operating system named SUNMOS was used on the compute nodes while OSF was used on the service nodes. To further complicate the internal environments, SNL was replacing SUNMOS with a new internally developed operating system named PUMA. The requirement to run a large scale version of the application in the local standalone environment was not a problem for ORNL as they owned this particular application. They had made several large production runs of this application within their environment. Because of this fact and as ORNL had two large Paragon on their computing floor they were able to concentrate on running the application in a locally distributed environment. SNL's first standalone attempt required that the application be run in a special fully dedicated environment that was all OSF. As *Supercomputing 96* came closer, the application was ported to run on PUMA compute nodes making it easier to run the application in a less dedicated setup of the supercomputer. Eventually, the application was successfully ran on 512 standalone within the SNL environment. Once successfully tested an attempt to connect the application over the WAN distributed environment was begun. Several unsuccessfully attempts were made to run a large scale version of the application across the combined SNL, ORNL environment. Although, unsuccessful these tests were critical to get ready to run the application during *Supercomputing 96*. Prior to *Supercomputing 96* only small versions of the application were successfully run in the PSC environment. The application at PSC was limited by the data transformation that was needed to get the data out of the T3D. The data passed from the T3D to an SGI workstation via a TCP/IP Hippi channel. The SGI transformed the TCP/IP datagram into an AAL 5 datagram. This limited the communication performance of the application to under 2 megabits per second.

## **9 Results of the Experiment at SUPERCOMPUTING 96**

SNL and ORNL ran a 1024 compute node version of the application. The application ran for two hours. During that period the application passed over four gigabytes of data. The sustained rate of the data over the entire period was 1 megabit per second. The highest sustained data rate was 40 megabits per second. Twenty megabits per second in each direction was sustained over a 10 second period. The application was started and ran for a short period of time during each day of the conference with similar peak traffic rates. The demonstration was awarded a High Performance Computing Challenge Gold Medal for Concurrency. ESNET production traffic was not impacted during the demonstration. Because the PSC branch of the proposed network performance was so poor, it was decided to limit the PSC interaction. An eight node version of the application was run between ORNL and PSC just to demonstrate that PSC was connected to the distributed environment

## **10 Experimenting with the G-WAAT International Connection**

The Global Wide Area Applications Testbed (G-WAAT) demonstration was designed to show collaborative tools interaction over international distances. The collaboration sites were the University of Stuttgart in Germany and Sandia's booth at the Pittsburgh

Convention Center. A high capacity telecommunication line was planned for the application. Unfortunately, this high capacity line was not realized so the exhibitors chose to run the demonstration using the conference's Internet access. As expected this led to some good performance periods and to some poor performance periods. During off peak hours the video connection was capable of providing about 4 frames a second which seemed to be acceptable to the users. During most of the other time the video was only capable of supplying four frames in seven seconds, slightly better than 1/2 frame a second while at the worst of times the video wasn't usable by the demonstration. The exhibitor's reaction was that as a cheap solution the results were better than they had expected. The visualization tools that were at the heart of the demonstration were capable of being controlled by either end. The bandwidth of that portion of the demonstration appeared to be adequate, providing a good interactive environment.

## **11 An Unexpected ATM Video Demonstration**

The ATM Video Demonstration was done in cooperation with Fore Systems. Fore had developed a new video product and asked Sandia to help them demonstrate it at the conference. This is a typical example of how demonstrations often materialize at the conference. Sandia needs a ATM video distribution system [3,6] so the demonstration provided a fortuitous opportunity to test a potential solution. The goal of the demonstration was to pass video traffic on the show floor between the Fore System booth and the SNL booth. Although this demonstration successfully passed video between the booth, a simplex transfer of the video was made necessary because of the lack of sufficient fiberoptic to support a duplex session. The Video end equipment required four fiberoptic cables to run a duplex video. This requirement wasn't based on bandwidth but instead on the physical needs of FORE video equipment. After SC96 it was discovered that the video equipment could run in a duplex mode using a single fiber pair. The transmit and receiver unit can be daisy chained together. Because this demonstration materialized during the show it was only partially successful. However, we were able to get an early look at a possible solution for Sandia's emerging real time video needs.

## **12 Lessons Learned**

The construction of the network within the booth was complicated by the fact that we elected to let the show's contracted labor place the cables without any on site supervision. The drawing that were sent to the contractor didn't contain detail measurements. The result was that the network drops needed to be moved once the network designers arrived. In the future a network designer needs to arrive on the first day of setup or the expense of making detailed drawing needs to be made. The addition of extra infrastructure was worthwhile, however, additional late requirements couldn't be satisfied because the booth setup required a static deployment of the network infrastructure. A booth layout that allows the network to expand as needed is a potential solution. A face-to-face meeting of the networking personnel from the separate laboratories before the conference began would also have been beneficial.

Because the networking personnel were isolated from the main booth the network didn't get the exposure that previous shows have provided. This also possibly resulted in some of the booth's demonstrator going directly to SCINET with networking problems instead of coming to the booth's on site networking staff. The effect of this was to impaired the solving of some networking problems and also complicated keeping the network in a known stable condition. The addition of IP address blocking within the Internet caused the original plan of using a corporate class C address to be unsuccessful and resulted in some last minute redesign

For the ORNL, Sandia, and PSC WAN demonstration it was decided early on to do a demonstration that mirror the goals of a production project. The efforts required to do the project would not have been reasonable for a one time demonstration. The effort to bring in PSC started too late in the project to adequately address all of the difficulties that the connection required. The interconnection of Sandia and ORNL a month and a half prior to the conference was just adequate to get the demonstration operational by the conference.

### **13 Conclusion**

By all measures the conference proved successful for Sandia. The conference provided a forum for Sandia to feature a wide variety of state-of-the-art networking and communications technologies and associated applications. The demonstrations benchmarked the current state of the SONET and ATM technologies, both of importance to many Sandia initiatives, and the evolving partnership with Oak Ridge National Laboratory. The success stories were the culmination of work accomplished by many people both within and outside of Sandia. In order to meet the challenging goals of the state-of-the-art networks, many teams were formed that crossed corporate and organizational boundaries. The conference also provided an opportunity to identify future goals and plan joint activities. The teamwork amplified the accomplishments and achievements of all the participants. Similarly, the conference provided many Sandians an individual opportunity for professional growth, friendly competition, and professional association. Still, on another level, the conference challenged its participants to take stock of their individual projects and to focus them for the demonstration. In all these ways, Sandia benefited from its participation in *Supercomputing 96*.

### **14 Acknowledgments**

To put together the activities surrounding the Supercomputing conference takes a large number of talented and dedicated individuals. Without their efforts, Sandia couldn't have accomplish the demonstrations that were done at the conference. We would like to thank the following individuals for their efforts in making Sandia *Supercomputing 96* networking efforts a success.

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- PSC** - Jamshid Mahdavi
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