

Amiga On A Chip

There has been something very interesting happening in the Amiga world. The seemingly impossible is happening. A young gentleman from the Netherlands by the name of Dennis van Weeren has created the original Amiga chipset on an Xilinx Spartan-3 400K gate FPGA development board! If that doesn't make sense, let me explain it in another way: Electrical engineers found out that computer logic can be arranged into blocks that can be programmed with a computer language. This chip is installed on a little development board that has other support chips that allow it to stand alone. You buy this kit and program it into whatever you want. It was with this basic type of kit that Jeri Elsworth was able to work another competing programmable logic chip, Altera, into a Commodore 64 on a chip. Once all the logic is programmed, it can easily and cheaply be burnt into mass production chips. This is how the DTV64 joystick was created and, if all the bugs get worked out, an Amiga on a chip could also possibly be created.

So far Dennis has developed a basic OCS chipset clone that is in the A500. Of course no sooner did this news break in the Amiga community when someone asked "Are you working on an AA or, even better, AAA chipset?" First things first.

This news was greeted with a lot of

skepticism at first. I remember when we went to Amiga shows, often there would be discussions on getting the chipset on to programmable logic. Those in the know stated the hardest part of doing this thing was dealing with the timing issues. The original Amiga designers did all their work the expensive old-fashioned way using transistor-transistor logic which handles things much differently than programmable logic.

A lot of work has to be done before this project can even be considered feasible. In the meantime, Dennis has publicly demoed his creation at different shows in Europe — and has even gotten his project to run games like Lemmings.

... James Lawrence
AmiTech-Dayton Gazette
April 2006

US Lags in High-Speed Access

PARIS — The U.S. continues to lag behind rich nations in Europe and Asia in adopting high-speed Internet connections, a critical form of technological infrastructure, according to data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The U.S. ranked 12th among industrialized nations, with 16.8 broadband subscribers per 100 inhabitants, as of December, the OECD said. Iceland overtook longtime leader South Korea for the

top spot. Countries in Northern Europe filled seven of the top 10 spots, underscoring how the region is leading the way in taking up this pillar of modern infrastructure.

The OECD data are collected from the governments of the 30 member states, as well as from publicly available financial reports from telecommunications companies.

Access to high-speed Internet connections is about much more than being able to download movies or music quickly. The quality of communication networks is a major determinant of productivity growth, allowing products and services to be made more efficiently and opening up new markets.

As recently as December 2001, the U.S. came in fourth in the OECD rankings, but since then it has fallen in terms of per-capita broadband penetration. The tumble has become the focus of debate in Washington tech-policy circles, as Congress recently considered amendments to communications laws. When the U.S. released its own broadband data in early April, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Kevin Martin wrote an editorial in the London-based Financial Times, saying that the OECD rankings do "not tell the full story."

Mr. Martin argued that the low population density of the U.S. made comparisons with high-density countries like South Korea unfair. He added that with 42.9 million lines, the U.S. still had more people connected to broadband than any

other country.

But the experience of countries like Iceland, and Norway and Sweden, which have even lower population densities than the U.S., indicates that low density isn't an insurmountable obstacle to wider broadband access.

Broadband access is usually delivered through telephone lines, also known as digital subscriber lines, or through cable networks. The next generation of broadband, which is already widespread in countries like South Korea, Japan and Sweden but still rare in the U.S., will travel over fiber-optic cables to the home or neighborhood and permit speeds that can be 100 times faster than the typical DSL or cable broadband connection.

Staying Connected

In many of the countries at the top of the rankings, governments have taken an active role in spurring broadband use and in some cases in building communications infrastructure as they would a public utility like highways or airports. In Stockholm, the municipal government laid fiber-optic cables throughout the city and rents them out to commercial operators who sell Internet services to consumers. In South Korea, the government heavily subsidized telecom companies to encourage them to lay fiber to villages and towns. Another approach used in countries such as the Netherlands has been to force telephone companies to allow rivals to use their lines to offer Internet services to consumers. Known as "local loop unbundling," this

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May Calendar

May 8 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:00 pm — Grand Prairie Public Library
901 Conover Drive, Grand Prairie

May 8 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
Approx. 9:15 pm — Location TBD

May 27 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am

approach causes the number of Internet providers to proliferate, leading to lower prices and faster access as the companies jockey for customers.

The U.S. passed a law mandating such a policy in 1996, but lobbying from phone and cable companies and several court decisions have undermined parts of these efforts. In recent years, regulators have rolled back many "unbundling" requirements because they contend that competition is forming on its own among cable, Internet companies and phone-service providers, making regulation unnecessary.

...Leila Abbboud

The Wall Street Journal, April 12, 2006

URL: <http://freepress.net/news/14939>