

Jim Maynard recently received, on behalf of Arup, the InAVation Award for Consultant of the Year and has a string of prestigious and technically complex projects on his CV. He talks to Anna Mitchell about a journey that begun with a childhood interest in electronics and brought him to one of the most influential consultancy firms in the world.

# Designing success

**O**n February 1, 2012 Jim Maynard, a principal consultant at Arup, accepted, on behalf of the company, the Consultant of the Year accolade at the InAVation Awards in Amsterdam.

Three years before the award ceremony Maynard was nearly 10,000 kilometres away proposing an ambitious AV, IPTV and communications solution in the offices of the Mauritius Commercial Bank.

Maynard was embarking on the start of a project that would see him pick up the award for the contribution he and Arup made to the bank through the role of project consultant for the organisation's new building.

After an initial proposal Maynard's first meeting with all of the bank's 16 directors turned into a five-hour workshop during which time every element of the project was explored. The discussion covered AV, room booking, videoconferencing infrastructure, a fully equipped auditorium with HD video suite, remote management, IPTV and digital signage.

Maynard notes the success of the exercise and says: "At the end of the session they understood why we had proposed what we had and what those benefits to their business would be." Maynard recounts that one of the directors said: "With these systems you're not just going to improve how we do things day to day, this will change how we even think about achieving our day to day."

The Mauritius Commercial Bank was a groundbreaking project. Place the building anywhere in the world and it's an impressive project. But in Mauritius, an island with a population of 1.2 million off the south-east coast of Africa, the project takes on new meaning.

For a start it is the first building south of the equator to achieve BREEAM environmental accreditation.

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*- Jim Maynard, Arup*

Secondly, an initial exploration of the island's AV integrators would have suggested that there was no local company with the skills to execute a project of this scale and complexity.

And this is where Arup was key to the project's success. The company used its expertise and experience to take local integrator, AVC, through the project, increasing skills and confidence within the company to not only deliver the project but provide a long-lasting benefit for the firm and the island. Arup also designed a 240 screen digital signage solution to operate across the bank's retail network of 42 branches including a 16 screen video wall in the main branch of Port Louis.

Arup is a huge organisation with more than 10,000 staff working across 90 offices in 30 countries. Its project line-up is staggering as it lays claim to the structural design of Sydney Opera House, work on the Centre Pompidou in Paris and more recently heavy involvement in the 2008 Beijing and London 2012 Olympics.

Despite the scale of the projects the company takes on, its approach is surprisingly personal. The Mauritius Commercial Bank is a good example and a project close to Maynard's heart. It is one one that he rates among his proudest achievements and most enjoyable endeavours.

Maynard started his career as an apprentice at Lucas Aerospace studying electronics engineering with a healthy focus on mechanics. From here he spent several years within the manufacturing arena and some time at

the BFI National Film and Television Archive.

"[This work] provided great insight into the world of cinema, film formats and the preservation of nitrate film stock which could spontaneously combust at any time," he notes.

From here Maynard decided he needed to return to electronics engineering, something that had been a subject of fascination since childhood. It was this desire to return to the industry that led Maynard to discover AV when he joined a small AV company as engineering manager.

Maynard then joined IVC Media where his first main projects were the BBCi Showcase and the Greater London Authority building. "The GLA was an exceptional project valued at £2.1 million with bespoke AV systems that followed the company's previous work within the Palace of Westminster and Portcullis House," he says.

"I was able to bring a considerable amount of value to the programming of these systems."

Maynard completed numerous other projects with IVC including AV/IT solutions at the Senned parliament building for the Welsh Assembly and a key project for Morgan Stanley. The Welsh Assembly project scooped an InAVation Award in 2007. Maynard notes the project was exceptional because many of the solutions proposed were not available on the market at that time. "We had to design, specify and develop at product level before we could define the actual system design. Two

The Mauritius Commercial Bank scooped Jim Maynard and Arup an InAVation Award at the 2012 ceremony





years later and we had delivered what is still considered to be 'the most technically advanced parliament building in the world', he says.

He comments: "Throughout this time at IVC we would often tender for projects from AV consultants and it was clear to me that there was only one that had the mark of quality and the desire to do things right. Arup was a clear choice in that respect and everything I had seen was about quality." Arup is fairly unique in the scale and scope of its expertise. "It has been said that there almost isn't any significant building in the world that doesn't have an Arup involvement somewhere," Maynard says. "It's a powerful statement and demonstrates the broad range of services that many other consultancies cannot offer. "This approach to design springs in part from Arup's ownership structure. The firm is owned in trust on behalf of its staff. The result is an independence of spirit that is reflected in the firm's work and in its dedicated pursuit of technical excellence."

Already Maynard hoped that he would work for Arup and when that opportunity arose in 2008 he says it was an easy decision to make. Maynard entered the company under the directorship of Graham Naylor-Smith, a prominent figure in the AV

industry and someone Maynard describes as "something of a legend".

Now well-established within the consultancy and with 15 years in AV under his belt Maynard is still excited about the industry and its future. "I'm very keen to see how the unified communications theme will play out," he notes. "People often confuse UC as IP telephony and perhaps a centralised gateway for their video calls. I believe we are tantalisingly close to having fully integrated solutions between different manufacturers to offer an almost seamless experience between your computer, desk phone, mobile phone, the meeting room and home for voice, video and data."

Maynard, and indeed Arup as a company, must remain at the fore of these trends in order to advise their customers effectively. "Most of our projects are on long timescales and, particularly with areas of technology that are rapidly changing, we need to know now what is coming up in the next year and beyond," he explains.

"We need to know what might be coming through research and development labs. As big users and specifiers of AV, we are often able to influence elements of the product. We have over 300 videoconferencing systems globally on our internal network for example. We tend to have NDAs with manufacturers to stay abreast and even play a role in that development."

With the InAVation Award and Mauritius Commercial Bank behind him Maynard still has much to look forward to and excite him within his role at Arup. The company has recently completed the design stages of the new NATO headquarters which will be completed in a few years time. "This is likely to be one of the largest AV projects in Europe ever undertaken," notes Maynard. Certainly one to watch out for in the coming years. ☺



## Video interview

Jim Maynard on Arup's work with the  
Mauritius Commercial Bank  
<http://tinyurl.com/coyaward>



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