

# Ancillary Room & Open Systems Team

*As recalled by Paul Golding in March 2025.  
[notes and photos inserted by Alan Cooper]*

## Ancillary Room

The computer room was so crowded with machines and we did generate a huge number of printouts. [note 1]

When I would come on night shift I would always dread being put on printers because you knew it was going to be a very busy time. The print console is where I am sitting in the gas article I sent over (note 2).



*Paul Golding at the Print Console. Taken from "LOLA has got it with gas" article, 1991*

All the printouts for the boroughs would go into the suitcases marked K,L,T,R (Hackney, Hillingdon, Tower Hamlets, Haringey [note 3] which you can see in the ancillary room video and the attached screenshot. These would be picked up overnight by the drivers.

There were also an insane amount of internal prints to go in the pigeon holes up to analysts and developers.



*Suitcases marked for the 4 boroughs. From Paul's YouTube video (see note 4).*

The Ancillary room also contained the horrendous Kern machine [note 5] that (attempted to) put all the printed letters into envelopes and it would get stuck every two minutes which is not great when you have thousands of letters to envelope every night. A large hammer and a swift kick were often used to fix some of its foibles.



*A Kern 3000 from the 1980s. These were complex electro-mechanical devices for inserting printed matter into envelopes. (c) [source](#)*

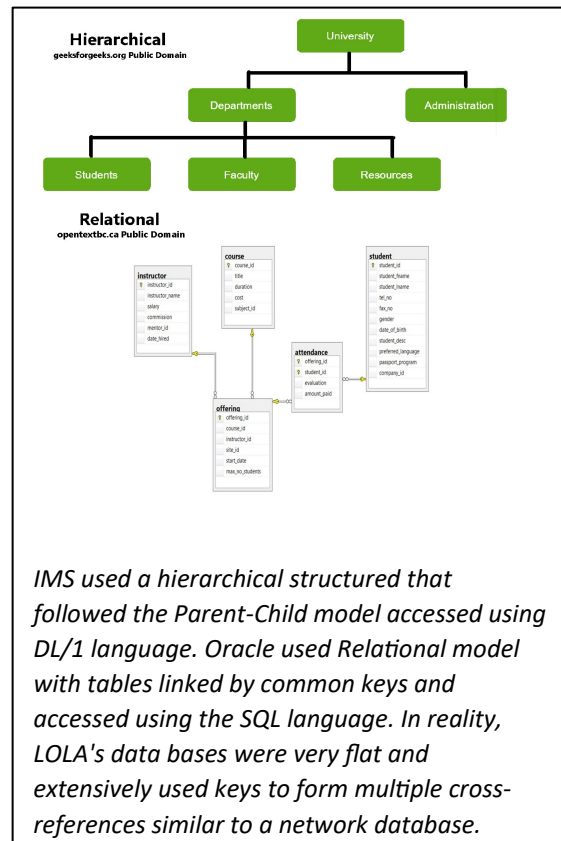
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## Open Systems Team (from c1993)

The Open Systems team mostly consisted of ex Operations staff: myself, Kevin Shimmin, Niall Carter, Frank Edohen, Mark Bevan and, later, Darren Lines. The boss was Mandy (I can't remember her surname I'm afraid).

This was a new team created around 1993 to set up Pyramid Technology Unix servers [note 6]. The idea was to eventually move processes to these new servers but I was only there for the first 18 months and most of this time was spent setting them up, learning about the Unix Operating System and the Oracle dataserver. We were system administrators and database administrators mainly.

As I recall, nothing went live on these before I left LOLA [in 1995].



## Bio

Paul worked at LOLA from 1988-1995 mainly on shifts in Operations but for the last year or two he worked in the newly created Open Systems department. He says he has very fond memories of his time there.

## Notes

1. Whilst LOLA prime aim was to make information available to council staff via on-line terminals with real-time updating, terminals were limited in number due to costs and therefore shared. Thus many management reports were still produced on paper along with all the programmer's development code and data administrators definitions.

As this was pre-internet so citizens did not have PCs at home. All communications to the public was on paper. A major print run was the production of Council Tax invoices and related matters (e.g. overdue letters) – one per household or business - with many citizens paying in cash at the council's offices.

2. *LOLA has got it with gas*, Natural Gas, July-Aug 1991. This article is about a further upgrade of LOLA's Electrolux-Servel gas powered air cooled water chillers. Note that the article wrongly refers to *London-on-line-authorities*. This article is available [here](#).

3. The codes K, L, T, R (Hackney, Hillingdon, Tower Hamlets, Haringey) were used throughout LOLA. For example, all the database definitions and file names had these code letters to keep everything separate but consistent.

4. Paul has uploaded to YouTube a video showing the operations department. It shows:

[0:00](#) Operator Console

[0:59](#) A Walk Around The Printers

[2:26](#) Job Control

[2:44](#) Stationery room

[2:55](#) Ancillary Room

[3:07](#) Kern machine

[3:22](#) Ops Kitchen

[3:39](#) Tape Library

[3:55](#) Machine Room

[6:37](#) Games Room

[7:11](#) Cartridge Machine Demo

[9:39](#) The Ops "Bridge Environment"

It can be viewed here: [A look at an old computer room in the early 1990s](#)

5. Kern AG is a Swiss manufacturer that has existed for 7 decades ([Kern website](#)).

6. Pyramid Technology was formed in 1981 by a number of ex-Hewlett-Packard employees. LOLA's model is not known but could have been 9000 line model from 1989. In 1995, Siemens Nixdorf acquired Pyramid. From [Wikipedia](#).

These Unix based mini-computers took advantage of the development of micro-processors. Compared to a mainframe, they took up much less space, consumed far less power and could be situated in an air-conditioned office.