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The ICL CAFS-ISP System

Book

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Foreword

On the 21st April 1985 it was announced that the Queen's Award for Technological Achievement had been presented to ICL in recognition of the successful innovation represented by the development of CAFS-ISP.

The problem of accessing large amounts of data in a structured manner, so as to present usable information within a reasonable time, began to be recognised as early as 1962. The CAFS system is a combined hardware and software solution to this problem. Additionally, it is especially well positioned because throughout the development there has been a clear understanding that any technological breakthroughs achieved in solving the problem must fit into the real world of existing customer data and equipment.

The CAFS-ISP product clearly represents a breakthrough worthy of the Queen's Award, and as such is one of the unique technological advances in the data-processing industry today. As a vehicle it is just now being recognised by other organisations trying to provide comparable data-access capabilities.

This issue of the *ICL Technical Journal* reviews the history of the development of CAFS from the first recognition and formalisation of the problem through to the evolution of the physical solution, and also the history of the supporting software. In addition it illustrates the use of the product in the real world, showing how this has extended from the original closely defined problem of data access to include the processing of text and other forms of information by real users to solve real problems.

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