There has been a considerable amount of activity in the MacroView area over the last couple of years. I want to give you a brief overview of some of the more significant ones.

1. MacroView Studio

Graphics generation and editing in MacroView has been a bone of contention for a long time. Developers of larger projects have liked the concept of being able to import existing CAD drawings directly into MacroView for animation. Conversely, others have felt that the lack of a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) capability has been a draw back. Certainly MacroView has done its graphics very differently from all of the other SCADA products on the market. A new MacroView graphics generation and editing package called MacroView Studio is now at a beta test stage and is being evaluated by several MacroView customers. It is due for release in quarter four of this year. It has been built in .Net and operates in much the same way as the integrated graphics editing packages in most other brands of Windows based SCADA software. The older ways of generating MacroView graphics through a CAD packages will still be supported and MacroView engineers will be able to import all versions of MacroView graphics into the new MacroView Studio software for subsequent editing.

MacroView Studio Beta Released!
The demo can be downloaded from http://sencom.com.au.
The demo version is fully functional for 2 days, then the save function is disabled. There is a list of known problems on the MacroView Studio page http://www.sencom.com.au/mvstudio.html. There are 2 downloadable videos that are available - complete with Apolons dulcet tones. If there is a positive response to this form of training, we will produce more.
Please email me any comments or problems.

2. MacroView on Linux (Red Hat)

Some large MacroView Red Hat systems have now been operating for two years or more, very successfully. These have been mainly in WA and overseas. Some of VRT's MacroView customers are now also making the transition; eg the Ord River Sugar Mill from Digital Unix and Xstrata from Solaris. We would encourage other Digital Unix and Solaris MacroView users to call us to discuss the benefits for their systems to migrate across to Red Hat. Many of our SCO users are planning to stay with SCO for the foreseeable future, but they should also be taking Red Hat into consideration in their longer term plans.

3. Allen Bradley ControlLogix PCCC MacroView Driver

This driver supports the legacy Allen Bradley protocols for PLC5, SLC, etc, as well as the new internet IP protocols for ControlLogix, ControlLogix Gateway, etc. It has now been operating successfully at Capcoal for several months.

4. HTML Reporting Printing from within MacroView

For the last ten years or more MacroView has been capable of generating reports on a scheduled or triggered basis. Unfortunately, these reports were limited to a bland text only type of presentation, eg we could not provide nice headers or font alternatives, etc for them. To improve the presentation of reports we developed MacroWeb in 1996. This later became PlantPortal. This enabled much improved presentation of reports but was restricted to users having to manually request a report through their web browser. VRT has now developed a method whereby these HTML reports can now be scheduled or triggered from with MacroView, thereby providing a high quality reporting capability totally integrated with MacroView.

5. Web Based Application Developed Environment for MacroView

MacroView has always had a powerful application development environment in the Metascript programming language. This involved some knowledge of SQL programming and specific MacroView training. Nevertheless, it provided a very powerful toolset for the development for not only standard mimic graphics, etc

but also for database and message oriented types of applications. VRT is about to start development of a higher level and more rapid application development toolset. This will be web/browser based and employ a series of Open Source tools in an effort to keep the cost down. Anyone having an interest in this, please contact Mark Oellermann.

6. OPC Server for MacroView

Matrikon are presently developing an OPC Server for MacroView. This will support the OPC DA standard, i.e. real time data. Future support for OPC HDA (history) and OPC ANE (alarms and events) will be considered on a demand basis. Matrikon has a product that allows bi-directional communications between OPC servers. Use of this would allow MacroView to communicate with OPC servers in PLCs and other real time devices. Matrikon are also looking at developing an OPC client for MacroView, dependent on demand. If you have an interest in any of these products, please let me know.

7. MacroView Users Group

In November last year, a users group meeting was held with WA MacroView users. Unfortunately, other MacroView users on the east coast were not aware of this until after it had happened. Another MacroView users group seminar in WA is planned for November this year. An agenda is not yet available, but if any of you are interested in attending this, please give me a call.

8. MacroView Blogger

Doug Bester in WA has set up this blogger to enable the MacroView community to share ideas amongst yourselves, as well as with the suppliers and developers of MacroView products. The address is: http://sencom.com.au/blogs/blogger.html. I encourage you to become involved in this community, The value of these type of forums obviously is directly related to the input that the participants contribute.

Over the last five years or so, we have put a lot of emphasis on supporting existing MacroView customers and installations. In future, we also intend to be much more proactive in promoting MacroView in addition to the other SCADA products we represent, where we believe MacroView has particular benefits. Our emphasis will be on niche, more complex applications, especially with those organisations who appreciate the benefits of Linux and/or Open Source solutions. While this may be a niche area at present, we see that Australia is now catching up with Europe and Asia in the adoption of these technologies. They have been heavily promoted by such large organisations as IBM and Oracle in recent years and we see potentially large growth in major user organisations in Australia in coming years. As MacroView is one of only a very small number of SCADA products that support this environment, we are very well positioned to be able to work with those of you who are interested in operating in this area.

If you have any comments or suggestions to make from any of the above, please feel free to give me a call to discuss this.

Regards,

John