

SPAR UK

The leading UK symbol group in the convenience retailing market

Widely recognised as a pioneer of scanning for independent retailers, SPAR has been working with BCP to supply retail solutions to its members since 1979. Early solutions concentrated on the back office requirement of stores, providing stock control and suggested ordering facilities linked to ICL and Omron tills. This provided early users with significant benefits from improved stock management and accurate replenishment procedures. As the number of installations increased these benefits were replicated with resounding success.

In the early 1990s the system was redeveloped using Progress and Microsoft to provide additional back office functionality and fully integrated, real-time EPoS to run on a new generation of PC based tills. The system now boasts massive back office capabilities with full integration to suppliers and hand held processing solutions for activities throughout the store. In addition the system can now take advantage of new technologies becoming available, such as cheaper, more powerful hardware and, of course, the Internet. The system is now proving cost effective to install across the whole spectrum of store formats, helping SPAR to move closer to its long term aim of an 'all-scanning retail membership'

Although BCP is now free from its exclusivity agreement with the SPAR organisation, we remain SPAR's software partner, working closely with them to develop their solution to meet their particular needs as the organisation grows and develops to satisfy the requirements of a changing market place. The most significant recent extension to the SPAR solution is the introduction of **Accord - AIMS** (**Accord** Internet Messaging Service) specially designed to promote the smooth flow of information, via the Internet, between head office and retail branches. **AIMS** is now installed at 5 of SPAR's 6 wholesalers and is already bringing significant benefits to Capper & Co Ltd who have implemented the system in all their company owned stores. Julian Jones, Retail Computer Services Manager at Cappers, explains that: "It's much faster and more reliable than our old polling method. We can now be absolutely certain that on Monday we will have the preceding week's sales and wages information from all 94 stores. And there's virtually no manual intervention. It's all automated. So the manpower savings are substantial."