

INSTALLING AN ARRAY PROCESSOR: A PROGRESS REPORT

John Newkirk

In May of this year, we took delivery of an array processor manufactured by Floating Point Systems. As of October, the processor still was not usable in application programs.

Initially, we believed the hardware was faulty. Both our software for the AP and the manufacturer's diagnostic software failed to execute properly. After four months, we found that the hardware was functional (after successfully debugging the diagnostic software), and we gained additional insight into the problems of our software when we subsequently received an FPS internal memo titled, "AP-120-B -- PDP-11 Interface CTL Register Modification."

The problems arose because we use non-vendor software, the UNIX operating system. This software is an excellent package, developed at Bell Laboratories, but is not supported by Floating Point Systems. We accepted the responsibility for installation and software interfacing since we had already interfaced a Control Data 300-Mb disk, several terminal multiplexors, a Gould plotter, a 1600-bpi tape drive, and an A/D converter. We didn't expect any unusual problems with the array processor.

It might be that the rapid growth of FPS is responsible for their inability to provide adequate documentation and cooperation.