SDA makes entrance into design automation market

Solomon Design Automation plans to make its initial product announcement in the first quarter of 1985. SDA systems are expected to be fully integrated through use of a unified database and a human interface common to all software tools. Products will support both conventional design methods and tools for full-custom IC design and advanced design methods with new approaches to cell compilation and automatic layout and routing. Initial systems will be offered on the new generation of high-performance, general-purpose, Unix-based computers and workstations.

SDA was founded in August 1983 by a group of electronic design automation experts headed by James E. Solomon, the former director of MOS analog product development at National Semiconductor. The current management includes Donald L. Lucas, chairman of the board, James E. Solomon, president and CEO, Joseph Backer, vice president of marketing operations, Min-Yu Hsieh, chief technical officer, Steven W. Pekarth, vice president of finance and administration, Mike Tucker, director of software engineering, Joe Costello, director of technical operations, and K. Charles Janac, director of strategic marketing. The technical team includes Kenneth H. Keller, director of database and graphics, Mark Bales, manager of database, Paul Swartz, director of design verification, Jiri Soukup, director of physical design, Steve Law, director of design methods, James Kleckner, manager of simulation, and Larry Lai, manager of test methods. Two professors from the University of California at Berkeley, A. Richard Newton and Alberto Sangiovanni-Vincentelli, are consultants.

SDA has received a total of $9 million to date from several major industrial corporations. Each of the industrial sponsors will place up to three VLSI designers and CAD developers in SDA's R&D facilities to test and adapt software to meet their special needs. Industrial sponsors include Sand Hill Finance Company, Continental Capital Ventures, Alan Patricof Associates, Applied Technology Partners, L.P., and a number of private individuals.

Siemens opens US R&D complex

The new Research and Technology Laboratories of Siemens Corporate Research and Support, Inc. has been established at the Princeton Forrestal Center, New Jersey, as the US arm of the Siemens Corporate R&D complex.

Dr. Karl Zaininger who heads the division says, “RTL is an American enterprise, working as an adjunct of Siemens Corporate Research and Technology. The principal functions are to act as a window on US technology and as a two-way bridge between US and Siemens worldwide research and technologies.”

Projects to be pursued at the new facility include automation of the software development process, development of the factory of the future, and next-generation office communications systems. Other major disciplines to which RTL is dedicated include artificial intelligence, robotics, distributed computer systems, VLSI design automation, and microelectronics.

Siemens has also recently announced its intention to establish a strong base in the world IC market. The company plans to build a wafer fabrication plant in the US and may also build a semiconductor manufacturing plant in the Orient. It has previously announced joint projects with Philips to develop 1M and 4M DRAMs, and also ICs for use in digital television receivers.

MCC opens packaging laboratory

Microelectronics and Computer Technology Corporation has opened a new laboratory where semiconductor packaging and interconnection techniques will be developed. Research programs will focus on the high-performance and cost-effective packaging required by very dense chips that will be used in future systems.

The laboratory includes all the technological requirements of an advanced semiconductor facility, built to a small scale because the intention is not to produce commercial products.

The results of the research will be initially licensed exclusively to the MCC shareholders who fund the research. After three years, the technology will be available for licensing to other interested parties, with royalties going to MCC and its shareholders.

For a detailed account of MCC and its work, see the article by Tom Rhyne, "VLSI CAD Research at MCC," in the November 1984 issue of Design & Test.