

**Summary of Preserving Classic Software Workshop
November 19, 2003
Computer History Museum**

Notes

SCC Meeting
November 19 2003

Lee Courtney
Tim O'Reilly
Tom Melcher
Eric Hahn
John Toole
Dave Babcock
Dave Rodell
Len Shustek
Bernard Peuto
Paul McJones
Mike Powell
Gardner Hendrie
Dag Spicer
Kirsten Tashev
Mike Walton
Sharon Brunzel
Mary Cicalese
Randy

Action Items

What: Continued Work on the Mission/Charter
Who: Bernard, John, Len, Kirsten, Gardner

What: Submission of Top 10 software artifacts (not classes) to be collected
Who: SCC

**General Comments
Introduction - Bernard**

Bernard kicked off the meeting by describing three categories of participants for the SCC:

1. In attendance core group – comes to meeting and gets the minutes
2. Discussion group – sharing minutes and ideas online as well as quarterly updates
3. Others in the “outside of the community” camp would be carefully brought into the (i.e. other museums, academic institutions). See Business Development section below.

Summary of Preserving Classic Software Workshop
November 19, 2003
Computer History Museum

The reason for the distinction at this point is that response has been a little overwhelming and this approach should help us manage the process as we build momentum.

The next items discussed were the proposed committee mission statement and charter. At a high level, it was agreed that the SCC would try to enable the CHM by working with CHM employees to establish reasonable guidelines that will facilitate software selection, meta data process and criteria and the data/information to craft the stories behind each software artifact.

It was determined that the mission statement needed some additional fine tuning. Bernard encouraged several CHM employees to join him to help refine a simple and reasonable set of goals. The proposed team includes: Kirsten, Lee, John, Len and Bernard and Gardner

The Charter specifies three basic actions:

1. Selecting, developing, and prioritizing (meta data) standards
2. Conducting real time “experiments” on a few collected artifacts – this will validate and show room for improvement in Action #1.
3. Advising CHM as to what may make sense to curate.

It was recommended that we work together to scope the opportunity and see how it evolves over the next 12 months.

Collection Process – Ad Hoc or Not?

Again, this topic generated a spirited discussion with a somewhat elusive decision. Though mapping back to the charter – it may make sense to introduce what John referred to as “parallel collection paths”. Some of the SCC members (i.e. Dick Gabriel) could potentially create a more informal process while other SCC members work under the guidelines of the Charter specifications. Len’s “List and Guidelines for Collecting” was reviewed as well. Hardcopies were passed out at the meeting.

Dag stated that the museum already has a software “room”. This software has not been inventoried or catalogued to date. There may be a few golden nuggets that could be gleaned and leveraged during the prototyping process (see the Charter).

Business Development

Building relationships with organizations with similar interests was determine to be a powerful opportunity for the Museum and the Committee, but it was agreed that we still need to work on developing mechanism that effectively links like organizations.

Collection Guidelines to Aid in ad-hoc Artifact Gathering and Assimilation?

Summary of Preserving Classic Software Workshop
November 19, 2003
Computer History Museum

Another interesting discussion gave debate to a self-serve approach as well. Software Engineers with artifacts could potentially use our standards as guidelines to categorize and breathe life into their work(s) of art. We can then incorporate that information into our budding system (this could potentially work with the ad-hoc process). Again this maps back for the need to create a set of guidelines that are simple yet engineered to be effective.

The Archive versus the Repository

This part of the discussion was centered on the differences between an archive and a repository:

The Archive: Information stored with an item by item description (meta data wrapper)
The Repository: Information (- translate - really raw data) as it does not contain a description wrapper that brings context to the content.

The reality is— if these definitions are to hold, that it is clear that we aspire to create Archives. But the Repository should not be discounted, it can be thought of as another mechanism - or state in the process – that can help us turn raw data into well understood information. It is a constant feed into the archiving, “curating” and presenting aspects.

Bits or Story “Bites/Bytes” about Bits?

Getting software to run (on hardware) versus just being able to document information about the bits and why they were created is yet another discussion that the group continues to grapple with. The engineers in the group want to see “artifacts in action”. The historians in the group want to see “artifacts in action”. The general consensus is that while we all would like to see “artifacts in action” this will probably be on a case by case basis. Some of this may be out of our control – pending that state of the software and the availability of the hardware.

Today’s Process

Kirsten presented a set of slides that discussed the current/planned CHM process. The presentation was succinct and introduced standard initiatives - namely the Dublin Core initiative. Basic examples were presented to the committee to help us get the feel of the DC potential. There was consensus that a Meta Data sub-committee should be formed to focus more on these issues.