

Minutes for SCC meeting of April 21, 2004

by Dave Redell

Attending

Sharon Brunzel
Mary Cicalese
Lee Courtney
Philip Gust
Dave Gustavson
Gardner Hendrie

Henry Lowood
John Mashey
Paul McJones
Chacko Neroth
Bernard Peuto
Mike Powell

Dave Redell
Len Shustek
Dag Spicer
Ed Taft
Kirsten Tashev
Mike Walton

Proposed Emphasis Shift: *Test Cases*

Bernard opened the meeting with a proposal to shift the major focus of the group's efforts. So far, the emphasis has been on conceptual preparation and "meta-discussions". While these have been valuable, Bernard suggested that we are at a stage where it is both appropriate and important to begin working on a number of specific examples as *test cases*. The general observation is that such efforts teach you valuable lessons that you might never notice without confronting the specifics of real examples. It is also the case that a good number of the members are anxious to "get on with it" and pursue initial preservation efforts in their areas of particular interest.

Len seconded the motion, and added that a list of specific deliverables should be drafted to avoid a drift in the direction of our efforts. Bernard agreed and stated his intention to convene a subcommittee to draft an initial deliverables list. Henry asked how far we should go with the test cases – e.g. just collecting artifacts vs. also collecting oral histories vs. constructing a coherent narrative around the materials. It was suggested that this may vary across the different test case, so the deliverables list should not be too rigid in this regard. Kirsten thought the idea of test cases sounded constructive, but did remind us that we are operating with a constrained set of resources, and that staff time as well as volunteer time would be needed. Dag agreed, and strongly advocated bounding our aspirations, at least until we have had some initial successes. Phil also supported the ideas of test cases, but pointed out that we should not lose sight of the outreach goals previously advocated, including a possible workshop in late 2004 (see below).

Taxonomy Subcommittee

Last month, there was an action item established to draft a "taxonomy handbook" to be distributed for review at this meeting. Paul reported that upon further consideration, this was deemed premature. In particular, it seems better to work through some actual examples first to validate the concepts (i.e. like the test cases cited above), so this is now the first order of business and the handbook is on hold until this has been accomplished.

Metadata Subcommittee

Last month, the expectation was stated that we would have a more detailed presentation at this meeting, but that did not happen. Instead, following a line reasoning like that of the Taxonomy Subcommittee, the new proposal is to work through a set of 2-3 examples of

applying the current Dublin Core based approach and present the results at the May meeting. There was a brief discussion of the question raised last meeting about explicit goals for the metadata effort. Sharon offered the following by way of clarification: The metadata is intended to implement a single unified catalog for all of the collections, even though the various collections are considered separate. The key goals of the metadata are *preservation* and *access*. Important questions include

- Exactly what forms of “access” are important to support?
- What is different about software compared with other types of artifacts (e.g. hardware)?
- What is the right granularity of a metadata “item”? (Proposal is to start with a coarse granularity and refine it as needed, based on what users want/need and how much work is implied.

Henry asked what level of Intellectual Property information should appear in the metadata. No resolution of this question was proposed.

Web Tools

A subcommittee [Mike, Phil, Chacko, and Bernard] will work on collaboration tools for the group.

The top-level email list for the group has been set up and tested, and seems to work. The name is: scc_active@computerhistory.org. There will also be lists for subgroups on specific topics or projects, as well as filters, digests, and so on.

Software Curator Position

This position has been approved by the Finance Committee for inclusion in the next CHM budget. The next step is approval by the Board of Directors.

Community of Practice

There was no notable progress since the March meeting, and Dick Gabriel was not in attendance. We are hoping for more to report in May. There was some discussion of the Workshop idea; various opinions were expressed without reaching a consensus, including:

- We should focus on our own processes and delay organizing a workshop for others until we have our own act together.
- A workshop requires advance notice and planning, which should be done in parallel with advancing our own work to a threshold status, so that the two can come together in a timely way.
- We should coordinate the workshop with this year’s Vintage Computer Festival at the end of October, since this would help increase attendance by non-local folks.
- We need a *concrete focus* for the workshop – i.e. not just the previously advocated goal of “building community”, which seems too vague to motivate anyone to attend.

It was proposed that Lee, Dick, Len and Bernard caucus about the workshop idea and report back.

MacPaint Project

Source files for MacPaint are in hand. This observation led to a lengthy discussion of IP issues (see next item). The other major activity that was discussed about MacPaint was the collection of oral histories. Grady Booch has some background on this. It was pointed out that the CHM staff has considerable expertise on oral history collection and could be available to train the project members how to do this properly.

Intellectual Property and Related Issues

The specific case of MacPaint raises this issue. Apple still owns the rights to the source files, yet CHM has a copy. What can/should/must the museum do to both protect itself, maximize the value of this artifact, and generally “do the right thing”. One traditional distinction regarding collections of artifacts that are nominally owned by other parties is between 1) physical possession, 2) IP ownership, and 3) access. For example, if you hold someone else’s IP, to what extent is your legal vulnerability affected by your policies allowing/preventing access by third parties? Someone noted that in the online digital arena, these lines can often become rather more blurry than with physical artifacts.

Related to copyright and other ownership issues are issues of secrecy – both in terms of commercial confidentiality and government security regulations. If the museum hold documents that are stamped “Company Confidential” or “Top Secret”, exactly what rights and restrictions define the museums options for handling such items? How does the age of the documents impact this issue?

Another interesting offshoot was the idea that the museum may hold materials such that no other party claims ownership, but general public access should still be prevented. A key example would be the source code of a virulent worm or virus.

One aspect of the necessary CHM policy in this area is a set of requirements imposed on donors of software, which could include: proof of legitimate ownership, granting of appropriate usage/access rights, possible indemnification, and so on. On the other hand, it is very important that the donation process not become overly difficult and/or legally intimidating. This will be an important balance to maintain.

Lee suggested documenting a canonical example of a company going through all of the proper steps to clear a piece of software for donation. We could then provide the resulting document to prospective donor companies to lower the barrier for them. Bernard and Henry said they would discuss this idea and report back.

The Legal Committee and CHM staff are working with lawyers (pro bono) to clarify these issues.

Bernard asked Len and Mike Powell to draft a document addressing the legal issues and the tolerable risk level for CHM.

Upcoming Meetings

Wednesday	May 19	1:00pm – 3:00pm	Granite Room
Wednesday	June 23	2:30pm – 4:30pm	Conf Room III [Note different time]
Wednesday	July 21	1:00pm – 3:00pm	Granite Room
Wednesday	August 18	1:00pm – 3:00pm	Granite Room
No September meeting			

Action Items

Note: Bernard has announced that we will stop maintaining a separate Action Item list, and will instead fold the new/open action items into each meeting's minutes.

Deliverables List: **Bernard** will convene a subcommittee to draft a proposed list for the Test Cases efforts.

Distribute documents: **Kirsten** is to email members (via the main email list)
1) an existing document defining file naming conventions for the Cyber Collection, and 2) a FAQ about "How to Accept Donations".

Metadata report: **Sharon, Dag, Paul, Lee and Mary** will try out the Dublin Core based framework on 2-3 examples and report back at the May meeting.

Workshop idea: **Lee, Dick, Len and Bernard** to discuss and report back.

Web tools, etc: **Mike Walton, Phil, Chacko, and Bernard** to discuss next steps.

Legal risks: **Len and Mike Powell** to write up their thoughts on acceptable levels of legal risk regarding IP issues.

Cononical donation example: **Bernard and Henry** to discuss the idea of documenting a clean case of a company donating software and report back their recommendations.