

Minutes for SCC meeting of June 23, 2004

by Dave Redell

Attending

Sharon Brunzel
Lee Courtney
Richard Gabriel
Kathe Gust
Philip Gust
Dave Gustavson

Henry Lowood
Paul McJones
Chacko Neroth
Bernard Peuto
Dave Redell

Dave Rosetti
Dag Spicer
Ed Taft
Kirsten Tashev
John Toole

Game Preservation (Henry Lowood)

Henry gave a very extensive presentation about game preservation in general, and the Stanford Game Archive in particular. It was based in large part on talks he gave at the Berlin Computer Game Museum and at a preservationists meeting in Portland that included a group focused on electronic media.

As in our discussions of software in general, the issues here include both long term preservation of the bits (media lifetimes, roll-forward, etc.) and emulation via reproduction of the operating environment. A third aspect, which has special relevance to games but should probably be considered for software more generally, is preservation of the *performance* – that is, a self-contained dynamic recording of the system in use. For games, as increasing visual sophistication continues to blur the line between games and movies, recorded game performances have become one form of *machinima* – animated films produced entirely on personal computers. This raises a variety of interesting questions – e.g. is editing allowed, or must performances be recorded exactly as they happened? Obviously, most non-game software lacks the entertainment value of visually sophisticated games, but a recorded performance of a significant piece of software being operated by an expert user would represent another valuable artifact to be preserved. Dick Gabriel cited complex CAD programs as a good example. Bernard mentioned massively multi-player games as another area in which a simple emulator would fall short of reproducing the full experience and a recorded performance could address this problem.

One major challenge for the game preservation community arises from issues of copyright and IP ownership. Especially in the light of DMCA, this can place the burden of proof on the preservationists, and copyright owners are sometimes actively antagonistic. Brewster Kahle has successfully obtained a three-year exemption from the USPTO, but something needs to be accomplished during the three years to demonstrate that the exemption is useful and should be extended.

Given multiple large game collections already exist, one idea that was raised was that CHM should focus on *emulators* as a specialty. This is an area that has generated some legal difficulties in the past – for example, Nintendo has actually *patented* the idea of a game platform emulator! Perhaps CHM could use its position of legitimacy to cut through some of the tangles in this area. There are also some hard technical issues in emulating increasingly complex and sophisticated gaming platforms (e.g. Sony PS2) in a way that provides both fidelity and efficiency. Both of these observations support the idea

that perhaps CHM should address emulation, as opposed to simply trying to create Yet Another Game Archive.

Report on Meta Data Training

On June 7, some members of the committee met with CHM staff members to become familiarized with the current setup for meta data entry and maintenance. The tool currently in use for this is *Inmagic*, which supports a relatively simple database of meta data records. We practiced using the tool and the existing support data (codes, field values, etc) to create and manipulate sample records. A streamlined subset of the existing documentation was provided to assist with the process.

The general reaction to the training was that it was valuable and should be more experienced more broadly by other members of the committee. At the same time, a couple of suggestions were made. One is that a more formally organized Training Module would be helpful, especially if we involve a larger group of people. The June 7 session was quite informal, and for a larger group, more structure would probably be better. Another observation was that *Inmagic* does not seem like a sufficiently powerful long-term tool, given its lack of referential integrity checking and other features that would make the maintenance and expansion of the database easier and less error-prone. The staff has stated that they regard *Inmagic* as an interim solution and that their long-term plan is to migrate to a more sophisticated tool. *DSpace* was cited as one candidate, and Kathe Gust is looking into this at HP Labs. She will report back on what she finds out.

It was also pointed out that some of the observed problems with the existing meta data are actually inherited from an older version of the database. These are being sorted out as the old data is gradually updated to match the quality standards of the new data being entered now.

There was substantial discussion of the need to identify the various classes of users, how they will want to access the collection, and the implications for the meta data to support those forms of access. For example, museum staff, specialized researchers and casual users are likely to need substantially different forms of support from the meta data.

Status updates on specific projects

A standing item in future agendas will be brief updates regarding progress on the various test case projects being pursued by various committee members.

Fortran Paul McJones reports that he has located a listing of Fortran II (approx 1300 pages) and plans to scan it. He has also started a Fortran-related blog called “dusty decks”. There is a film that was made to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Fortran, and Paul has located a copy that the owner is willing to donate to CHM.

MacPaint On June 8, 3+ hours of oral history were taken by Grady Booch, featuring Bill Atkinson and Andy Hertzfeld. The actual bits have been largely assembled, which has been much easier than Paul’s experience with Fortran. It was noted that a lot of the original material is diagrams and other descriptions that are hard to interpret out of context. Fortunately, the people who can explain these artifacts are available, but for many other cases (especially older ones) this will not be the case. It was also noted that we could use some additional equipment (e.g. document camera, etc) to aid in incorporating these supporting materials into the oral history. In some cases, an on-the-fly

accession procedure would be helpful when oral history subjects bring materials with them expecting to leave them when the finish.

NLS Phil Gust has contacted Doug Englebart. Discussions are at an early stage. Doug has some software for PDP-10 emulation. The point was raised that NLS, as a complex collaborative system, might be a good opportunity to take advantage of performance recording, as opposed to just single-user emulation.

Mailing Lists and other Tools

Chacko announced the creation of three topic-specific lists: MacPaint, Page Description Languages and Fortran. Others will follow as needed. These are currently subsets of the main committee email list, but are intended to include outside contributors beyond the committee membership.

Also, the Active and Announce email lists are being merged, as the distinction was not proving useful.

Upcoming Meetings

CANCELLED	Wednesday	July 21	1:00pm – 3:00pm	Granite Room
	Wednesday	August 18	1:00pm – 3:00pm	Granite Room
No September meeting				
	Wednesday	October 20	1:00pm – 3:00pm	Granite Room
	Wednesday	November 17	2:30pm – 4:30pm	Conf Room III
No December 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.