

Minutes
CHM Software Preservation Group
January 17, 2007
by Dave Redell

Attending

Jonathan Cheyer
Bob Fraley
Henry Gladney
Kathleen Gust
Philip Gust

Al Kossow
Paul McJones
Randy Neff
Eric Petrich

Bernard Peuto
Dave Redell
Bob Sanguedolce
Dick Toepfer

Status Reports

Al Kossow described progress on reading tapes from the DEC Large Computer Group. There are around 900 of these tapes, with a combined contents of about 60 GB. They are being read and Rebecca is working with Al on cataloging the files.

Al also noted large shipment of materials from Germany has arrived and is being stored in Morgan Hill temporarily. While some water damage to the containers has been observed, it is that the believed that the contents, which were separately wrapped, are all intact. Final arrangements for long-term storage of these materials are currently being made.

Henry Gladney reported that there has been no progress on the Snobol effort since the last meeting.

Dick Toepfer reported on the effort to preserve CTOS (Convergent Technologies Operating System). An agreement has been negotiated to gain access to the sources. Recovering the files from the media may be a bit challenging, but Al expressed confidence that it can be done.

Eric Petrich described recent work to move the Fortran materials he has collected into the official CHM collection, via the real accession process. Then the key issue will be obtaining sufficient rights to the materials to allow public display, emulation, and so on.

Paul and **Bernard Peuto** reported on progress with System R. Discussions with the IBM Legal Department are very encouraging, and should result in broad permission for a range of uses of the materials. This is part of a larger effort to systematize the process for obtaining such rights. Once a few major companies have gone through this process, it should be easier to convince others to follow suit.

Phil Gust and **Jonathan Cheyer** reported on a relatively quiet month for the NLS project. Some progress has been made on defining the creation *releases* of NLS, and they are drafting a TOC for the first such thing. There has also been discussion of what a cyber-exhibit of NLS would comprise.

There was also a brief mention of the Multics History Project. Olin Sibert is apparently making continued progress on gaining appropriate rights to the content from Bull in France, which obtained ownership from Honeywell many years ago.

Events

Paul McJones briefly discussed the ACM *Third Conference on the History of Programming Languages* (HOPL-III), scheduled for June 9-10 in San Diego.

In conjunction with this, Paul explored the availability of source code for some key languages, with somewhat disappointing results. While many languages have spawned loose groups of interested people, few have generated efforts at true preservation. One positive example is Lua, an embedded language from Brazil used for games and other applications, often in conjunction with C. There is a Lua website with extensive work by an active community, but this seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

There was also discussion of this month's Fortran 50th Anniversary event in the UK, which sadly has no US counterpart.

SPG name, charter and website

Bernard kicked off a discussion of the renaming of the SCC and a review of its mission. In some ways, SPG is similar to other "SIGs" at CHM. There are three typical functions of such a group and its website:

1. "Clubhouse" – a virtual gathering place for group members with calendar, postings, and so on.
2. "Collection" – a group-specific archive of materials, such as for CHM's IT Corporate Histories Project ("ICHP"). Such archives are working areas for the groups and are not part of the official CHM collection.
3. "Trophy Case" – a public viewing area of selected items of more general interest, such as documents, emulators, and so on.

A key issue is the relationship of the group site to the official CHM collection. The suggested process is a pipeline from raw material in the group's working area to full accession into the CHM Collection Database, called "Mimsy". As materials move along the pipeline, the standards rise in terms of quality, significance, provenance, IP rights and completeness. While there is a distinct event when materials transition into Mimsy, we need further clarification of some surrounding issues. Two that were discussed were the level of public visibility of the "seam" between group archives and Mimsy, and the division of labor between group members and CHM staff as materials move along the pipeline.

CHM "Timeline" Exhibit

A major CHM focus is the massive effort, with funding from the Gates Foundation, to build a real world class exhibit space around the Computing Timeline concept. For SPG, the central question is: what is the place of software in this exhibit? It would seem natural for SPG to play a role in both providing and recruiting expertise to flesh this out. Al in particular emphasized that SPG would contribute most effectively by focusing on the separate "theme room" that is proposed for software as part of the exhibit. There has been minimal effort on this so far, while a lot of effort is going into the (largely hardware dominated) main line of the exhibit, so it represents a good leverage point for SPG efforts. It also may serve as a good context for prioritization of the SPG collecting process. There was discussion of the need for some level of software emphasis in the main timeline as well, but the consensus supported Al's suggestion. The ICHP (see above) was also mentioned as a potential source of collaboration in this effort. Jonathan asked whether this effort could also be used to motivate loosely connected SPG volunteers, but Bernard expressed some doubt about this, given past history.

Upcoming Meetings (2007)

Day	Date	Time	Conf Room
Wednesday	February 21	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm	Hopper CANCELLED
Thursday	March 29	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm	Hopper. CHANGED
Wednesday	April 25	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm	Hopper
Wednesday	May 16	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm	Hopper.
Wednesday	June 27	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm	Hopper CHANGED
Wednesday	July 18	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm	Hopper
Wednesday	August 15	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm	Hopper
Wednesday	September 26	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm	Hopper
Wednesday	October 17	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm,	Hopper
Wednesday	November 14	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm	Hopper.
(no December Meeting)			