

Short Presentation to the Software Collection Committee 8/24/05

Purpose is to introduce cyber1.org, producing thought about how the SCC can interface with entities like cyber1.

Cyber1.org

-Created Spring 2004 upon successful porting of tiny version of PLATO to Dtcyber by CF (controlfreaks)

-The project had a clear goal: to preserve the PLATO software AND community by running a free PLATO system. Community members were to be encouraged to contribute time/old programs/stories/preserve a feel.

-We obtained rights to the software from VCampus prior to actually having the software.

-Software obtained from the last remaining functioning cyber 830, from the FAA in Oklahoma City.

Used tape2tap utility (from cray-cyber.org) running in nos to create .tap files out of the PLATO masterfiles on the cyber's hard drive. Then FTP'd them via a CDCNET box (which runs tcp/ip) out to my linux box.

-Tools used: readtape, mag2tap, nt2tap, pf, MS Excel, various PLATO-specific conversion utilities to deal with various tutor revisions within PLATO. We get data from a large spread of years.

How we process acquisitions:

1. I s/w person about history of tape in question, get contact info, decide whether we want it (usually yes with tapes, usually no w/hardware). Data regarding contact goes in excel, but a contact manager would do an even better job.

2. Tape arrives and is given unique identifier and little sticky tab.

3. 9-track tape drive + readtape or mag2tap utility generates unix file.

(If fail, either CF's best get a crack at it, or, if contents highly valued, sent to data recovery company.)

4. turn on emulator, boot nos, use nos utility (mfadd) to import file into CDC masterfile

5. from within PLATO, load new masterfile
6. from within PLATO, run file conversions

Emulators

- Provide a localized focus for groups of hobbyists. Focus is important.
- Appeals to collectors but also those who enjoy programming, porting, tweaking, gaming, i.e. a broader audience.
- Gaming provides a lot of the energy put into cyber1. Hobbyists are doing things for Fun.
- Because of the emulator, we were able to quickly create a community. This gave us credibility and allowed me to obtain the rights to a large portion of CDC software (which had been hitherto unobtainable by controlfreaks).

I could see the SCC portal with a variety of emulated systems running (it's not expensive to do so), with hobbyists scrounging around to find old programs. Eg's emulationzone.org, emucamp.com, emulation.net.

How SCC can fit in to the hobbyist/preservation world

Given the breadth of the task of software preservation, the SCC needs to utilize community preservation efforts. Someone in charge of identifying/contacting/building relationships with entities like cyber1 seems to me a good use of time. Knowing what the SCC wants/needs and communicating it to a given retro interest group (RIG?) allows the RIG to do the work of obtaining the data and organizing it before giving it to SCC. This is another area that seems a particularly good use of time.

-SCC offers credibility which helps in obtaining software and is desirable in general. Hobbyists are not sure if they're wasting time, a museum makes them feel good about doing whatever it is they're doing.

-links from the SCC website would be valued by hobbyist communities

-SCC could offer website/server space to those who need it. I doubt it would be over-used.

-SCC offers resting place for collectors when RIG operators die/run out of

money/get bored, etc.

-Setting clear targets, offering something like 'SCC affiliation' in return could make sense. Goals could look like

- comprehensive list of all software products created by xyz company
- copies of the software that have been obtained by the hobbyist group