

Minutes for SCC meeting of June 22, 2005

by Dave Redell

Attending

Jonathan Cheyer
Lee Courtney
Henry Gladney
Gardner Hendrie

Sellam Ismail
Cynthia Jordan
Jim McClure
Paul McJones

Randy Neff
Bernard Peuto
Michael Powell
Dave Redell
Len Shustek

SCC Website Update

Mike summarized the latest improvements to the SCC website. We now have contact forms to generate email, as well as more Help info and SCC info in general. There is also a list of external collectors and collections, which represents a great opportunity for some enthusiastic volunteer who could take it over and manage/improve it. In general, we could use several more volunteers to work on the website. Upcoming improvements include secure handling of passwords (with a facility for recovering forgotten passwords) and a more friendly interface for optional visitor login.

There are some open questions about the scaling of the current file/folder model for the website repository, but so far, we have not seen any evidence that we might be approaching any practical limits. We know there are some Plone/Zope sites that are larger than ours, but the jury is still out on the limits to scaling of the current approach.

Reminder: The site is located at: <http://community.computerhistory.org/scc>. SCC members are encouraged to register new personal accounts on the site. To register, send email to scc-admin@computerhistory.org, as described on the site.

Website Strategy

Bernard summarized his list of top-level issues regarding the SCC website:

1. The limits to the file/folder model, mentioned above.
2. The need, discussed at the May meeting, to accommodate at least three classes of users: *Visitors*, *Active members*, and *Contributors*. Questions remain open of how best to implement this and how well Plone supports such distinctions.
3. The lack of tool integration, which requires the use of separate tools for tasks like email, blogs, etc.
4. Integrated tools for Intellectual Property management. This is not time critical, but it will be needed in the long run.

Henry mentioned that just a few days before our meeting, the JCP issued final approval for the JSR 170 standard, entitled “Content Repository for Java™ technology API”. It is not clear exactly how this will impact what we are doing, but there is certainly a potential for relevance depending on how Java fits into our long-term plans.

Regrouping

Bernard continued with a discussion of how the SCC should focus its efforts. There seems to be a general consensus that we want to put actual collecting activity front-and-center, and view the infrastructure largely as a means to this end, rather than itself being

the main/only focus of the group. This will help in recruiting new members, since an interest in preservation of actual software seems to be what motivates most of us. This is not to deny the importance of infrastructure, but we need to keep our infrastructure work grounded in concrete examples to minimize wheel-spinning.

There followed a lengthy discussion of how the SCC can best work synergistically with outside groups and individuals to encourage software preservation activities. Paul emphasized that in his experience, this work is very difficult and the set of people who are prepared to commit the necessary time and energy to really do something substantial is correspondingly very small. There followed an interesting discussion of the role of individuals vs. web-based communities in software preservation, with the conclusion being that there seem to be a mix of the two forms of activity, and that the SCC should look for ways to support both. Possibilities include: providing resources (website, etc), providing tools and examples, writing a “how-to” handbook, creating “seed” projects to attract a critical mass of people, and/or simply lending the imprimatur of CHM to individual/group software collecting activities.

Henry asked about the interest of members in four specific software collection areas:

1. Security & privacy
2. Databases (esp: relational)
3. GMLs (XGML, etc)
4. Digital libraries & content management

He asked if he should be looking for potential project drivers to run projects on one or more of these topics.

Project Status Reports

1. Fortran. Paul reported that the scanning of the Nutt microfiche is waiting for Al Kossow to get around to it. He will keep pushing for this, or try to find an alternative route.

2. Lisp. Paul’s focus has shifted from Fortran to Lisp. The result is a “pretty complete” website with lots of info, manuals, etc, as some actual software. Paul described this at our last meeting.

3. NLS. Jonathan reported on progress with NLS. On the legal front, Boeing will turn over NLS thp the CHM – details are still being worked out. On the technical front, progress is being made on creating the “Clean Clone” of Doug Englebart’s personal NLS system. This is a major undertaking, which may take another month or two to complete. It will run on a PDP-10 emulator hosted on Unix. A milestone will be a demo of the running Clean Clone at an SCC meeting. Another great goal would be to have it running at the CHM Fellows Dinner (October 18) when Doug will be inducted as a CHM Fellow.

Software Preservation Workshop

Work continues to clarify the definition of this event. Each member of the working group is proposing a list of potential invitees, which should provide a more concrete context for proposing and evaluating suggestions for topics, sessions, etc. Other SCC members are invited to submit their ideas.

Meeting Schedule

Bernard raised the issue of the meeting schedule, and there was a consensus that monthly meetings still seem about right. (Any more often would be burdensome, and any less often would risk loss of momentum.) There was some support for moving the meetings from early afternoon time slot to one at the end of the work day, since this would reduce the conflict with members' work schedules. We will consider changing the schedule starting with the September meeting. This can be finalized at the August 24 meeting.

Upcoming Meetings

Day	Date	Time	Conf Room
Wednesday	August 24	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Hopper
Wednesday	September 21*	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm*	Hopper
Wednesday	October 19*	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm*	Hopper
Wednesday	November 16*	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm*	Hopper
No December Meeting			

* Times/dates tentative, pending possible reschedule