

Reverse Engineering Project Seeking Participants

THE DEADLINE IS APPROACHING for the Reverse Engineering Demonstration Project, a cooperative study sponsored by WorldPath Information Services that will test different tools and methods on a single software system. The project's goal is to provide new understanding of the relative merits of different software reengineering approaches. Participation in the project is open to all commercial and non-commercial research groups and product organizations in the reverse engineering and reengineering fields.

The deadline for the first group of participants is June 15; the entrance fee is US\$350 for commercial entities or US\$100 for academic and nonprofit researchers to help defray project costs and ensure serious participation. WorldPath founder Elliot Chikofsky, who first announced the project in November 1996 at the 3rd Working Conference on Reverse Engineering, said about 20 to 30 research and commercial organizations are expected to participate in this "first wave."

"The plan is for this to be an ongoing thing. But no one has really tried this before," he said. "Our hope is that other organizations will see this and decide to donate code. The problem is that companies are very reluctant to air their dirty laundry. They want to share the clean code, which isn't as interesting to analyze."

THE CODE. Project participants will analyze

the software of the WELTAB III Election Tabulation System. WELTAB was created in the late 1970s to support the collection, reporting, and certification of election results by city and county clerks' offices in Michigan. It was originally written in an extended version of Fortran on IBM and

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Amdahl mainframes under the University of Michigan's MTS operating system, but was moved to various machines during the 1980s, which caused inevitable modifications in the evolution of the code.

WELTAB was later converted to C and run on PCs under MS DOS. Features grew with successive versions of the software throughout its history. Modifications were often made with a typical software maintainer's economy of effort: some sections were rewritten entirely, while most still show signs of their Fortran origin; code copying with changes was the preferred style. The result is a system of C programs and command/data files that are real and presented as-is, warts and all.

Non-US participants will receive extra coaching from WorldPath on US election procedures, so there will be no difficulty due to the subject matter in analyzing the software or interpreting the results.

TASK. Participants can use any kind of reverse engineering and reengineering methods and tools, both automated and manual. Among the issues to be addressed are: How do your tools help an analyst or maintainer understand what the code does and how it works? If your method calculates metrics, what values does it calculate for the parts of the subject software? If your tool creates GUI interfaces for non-GUI code, what do the resulting screens look like?

Participants will receive the subject software for use with their methods and tools. A representative of WorldPath will work with each participating team to handle questions about the system and assist in interpreting results from the developer's perspective.

THE RESULTS. A summary presentation of the project will be presented at an as-yet-undecided conference in the Fall of this year; WorldPath will also work with participants to prepare summary papers of their projects for publication in journals and a book about the project as a whole.

Applications and project information are available on the Web at <http://www.worldpath.com/reproject/> or through Reverse Engineering Demo Project, WorldPath Information Services, PO Box 400, Burlington, MA 01803 USA; phone +1-617-272-0049; fax +1-617-272-8464; reproject@worldpath.com. ◆

Networld+Interop 97: Internet Explorer Takes a Bashing

NETWORLD+INTEROP 97 WOUND to a close in Singapore April 11 with a day-long focus on Sun Microsystems's Java, the highlight being a keynote address from Java evangelist Miko Matsumura, who used the platform to dabble in a little Microsoft bashing.

Speaking on "Java: The Global Innovation Percolator," Matsumura pulled no punches with Microsoft's ActiveX technology, which he said is seen as something

ridden with security flaws. Worse, ActiveX has resulted in Microsoft Internet Explorer being ridiculed as "Internet Exploder" because of the alleged system crashes it causes.

Matsumura even showed off an Internet Exploder test page on the Internet, which opened with a warning: the site is hostile to Internet Explorer. Ironically, his presentation itself was marred by a couple of crashes; his system was employing the Netscape browser,

which features no ActiveX content.

On Java itself, he said that although it was only 600 days old, it already had about half a million developers working on it, with more than 250 books already available on the market. Many IT companies, including Microsoft, have licensed Java too.

Networld+Interop 97 opened April 7 and attracted approximately 100 companies and 15,000 people. —*Newsbytes News Network* ◆