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SPECSINTACT MINUTES

SPECSINTACT INTERAGENCY CONFIGURATION CONTROL

AND COORDINATING BOARD (SI-CCCB) MEETING

Alexandria, Virginia

Attendee List

April 23, 1997

INTRODUCTION

Miguel Morales - NASA

During the last 6 months, SPECSINTACT has shown steady progress.

- Elimination of software bugs
- Major improvements to WordSpec
- Systematic and rigorous testing
- Positive feedback from user community
- Enhancements to SPECSINTACT Web Site
- Better communication with users

Miguel commended EG &G on the powerful team that was staffed, in the past year, to enable all the progress and accomplishments with the tasks listed above.

He announced that following Army Civil Works mandating the use of SPECSINTACT last month, Army Military Programs have followed suit this month.

HELP DESK REPORT

Louise McMonegal - NAVFAC

Since April 1995, Louise McMonegal has been tracking statistics on the support calls received by the SPECSINTACT help desk. The overall volume of calls has dropped, particularly with regarding GPFs and lack of speed in the SISGML Editor. The largest volume of calls was generated regarding the Submittal Register. Al Lew questioned the problems with Submittal Register. EG&G replied that coding the sections to generate an appropriate Submittal Register was the most complex task that a Spec Writer undertakes while preparing specifications. There are also three separate submittal forms each with different coding requirements.

STATUS OF NAVFAC SURVEY

Carl Kersten - NAVFAC

Carl Kersten stated that NAVFAC had over 1000 responses to the previous survey. The new survey results are not in yet, but said that he would e-mail the results to the board members when they became available. Miguel Morales asked Carl to provide a side-by-side comparison between the previous survey results and the new ones, and Carl responded that he would e-mail both the old and new results.

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ACTION: Carl Kersten will e-mail both the old and the new
survey results to all board members.
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ELECTRONIC BID SETS (EBS) BY YEAR 2000

Dave Skar - NAVFAC

Dave Skar described the current EBS process, whereby project specifications and bidding and contract requirements are converted to Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format, and the drawings are converted to the DOD CALS format. Both types of files are then combined into bid sets and placed

on a CD-ROM disc for distribution as bidding documents. Dave stated that the PDF and CALS formats were chosen because viewing software for both types of files was readily available in the public domain. Dave also stated that some bid sets were being made available via the Internet. At this time, NAVFAC does not accept contract bids in electronic format.

Dave further described NAVFAC's experience with distributing electronic bid sets to date. SWDIV undertook pilot projects in 1996 for MCP projects (i.e., a BEQ), and NAVFAC sent a draft business plan to its field divisions. These efforts revealed no show-stopping problems with the electronic distribution process, while the pilot projects alone saved the need for printing 1.6 million pages of documents. Based upon these results, NAVFAC has set the goal of standardizing on EBS by the year 2000.

Dave identified several possible concerns with EBS, including:

- Validity of Electronic Signatures. This was not a major problem in the pilot projects. The requirements for electronic signatures vary from state to state; however, so Dave suggested that the federal government needed to develop its own guidelines to preempt the requirements of the various states.
- Increase in Time Required to Compile Electronic Bid Sets. The pilot projects revealed that EBS added two to three days each to the design, contracts, and project specifications phases of the bid set process. The suggestion was made that this increase was an anomaly resulting from the novelty of the process. Dave stated that NAVFAC was concerned with reducing or eliminating these delays.
- Amendments to Bid Sets. These typically need to be distributed quickly, and so the CD distribution process might not be feasible.

The possible benefits from EBS are reduced paper costs, reduced preparation time, and greater contractor flexibility in viewing and distributing the bid sets to subcontractors. Dave explained that the government was supposed to recoup the costs of the current printed bid sets, but that this did not always happen. NAVFAC intended to continue to pursue EBS.

PROCUREMENT DESKTOP DEFENSE (PD2)

Gail Guseman - (AMS)

On the invitation of Ford Chinworth, Gail Guseman demonstrated the PD2 document management system developed by AMS for DoD.

Background

Naval Facilities (NAVFAC), Army Corps of Engineers, and NASA designers currently use a product maintained by EG&G called SPECSINTACT to develop their specifications, and, in some cases, clauses for construction projects. The latest version of SPECSINTACT generates these items in an Standard Generalized Mark-Up Language (SGML) format. The data/specifications can be converted to Microsoft Word for editing in Word via an add-on tool called WordSpec, and then converted back to SGML for QA and print processing.

As part of a DoD-wide initiative to support a Standard Procurement System, an award has been made to American Management Systems (AMS) for their Procurement Desktop - Defense (PD^2) product. While this will ultimately affect both the NAVFAC and Army Corps of Engineers procurement community, NAVFAC has already made significant investment into using not only the PD^2 product, but also leveraging the desktop foundation software on which the procurement functionality rests as a basis for other applications. Examples of applications already being designed include field office support and project management, with an eye to additional applications later.

In addition, as part of NAVFAC's ongoing corporate-wide initiative to reduce "islands of automation," they are looking for opportunities to facilitate the sharing of information between *corporately* adopted tools like PD^2 and SPECSINTACT. At this time, the feasibility and impact of this interface are being discussed. To the extent possible, the interfaces should take advantage of what each system does best and not "reinvent the wheel."

Alternatives

Several options for how the two products could share information were discussed, as follows:

- The SGML files generated by SPECSINTACT and then converted into word processing files via WordSpec could be imported directly into the PD^2 database using the "Document Import" feature. This solution works today with absolutely no modifications to either product. However, because SPECSINTACT creates an individual file for each section of the specification and the table of contents, numbering upwards of 50 or more files per project, this alternative is not very desirable from a user perspective as they would have to import each of the files individually.

- In response to this drawback, one solution is to modify PD^2 to provide the ability to import multiple word processing documents at the same time. With this alternative, each file would be stored as a separate word processing binary large object (BLOB) in PD^2's database and would be reflected on the desktop as a separate attachment. Since the primary recipient of this information is procurement personnel who do not need to maintain the individual files, this was not deemed an optimum solution.

- Another alternative discussed was the modification of SPECSINTACT to generate a single word processing file, incorporating the table of contents and individual section files into one specification document that could be imported into PD^2. Two alternatives were discussed for the source of the project specifications text: SGML and WordSpec; several output forms were considered: PDF, SGML, WordSpec, HTML. The resulting file could be upwards of 1,000 pages long, and we will need to ensure that PD^2's "Document Import" feature will adequately support documents of this size. In addition, this alternative will take an increased amount of machine time both within SPECSINTACT and PD^2. However, it was agreed that increased machine time for a process that would be initiated fairly infrequently was preferable to increased user time.

- A fourth alternative discussed was for SPECSINTACT to create a set of files composed by the 16 Divisions of the specifications, bookmark them at the individual Sections, and use these files as the attachment to PD2. The same set of source and output languages as in the above alternative were discussed. However, using the SGML as the source for PDF was (subsequently) demonstrated as presently possible. The solution of using PDF grouped by Division was (subsequently) indicated to be the format successfully used in all the previous NAVFAC and USACE pilot efforts for Electronic Bid Solicitations (EBS).

OUTSTANDING ISSUES

With the assumption that the final alternative above is the selected one, a tentative level of effort and schedule of availability need to be determined. The SPECSINTACT Configuration and Control Board requested EG&G to prepare for it a Resource Analysis of the most desirable source, output, and file size for EBS and PD2 attachment.

ACTION: EG&G agreed to investigate the possibility of creating a single large file from multiple specification files, in order to expedite the process of loading the documents into PD2. AMS agreed to investigate the possibility of providing a batch loading process for PD2, so that specification files would not have to be loaded individually.

CONNECTIONS WITH ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

Ford Chinworth - NAVFAC/Al Lew - NASA

Ford opened a discussion on the support that can be provided by SPECSINTACT to move the documents along in the lifecycle of the construction project. Specifically, regarding file format(s) to use with EBS and PD2. Discussion centered on using Word document format, PDF, and how the SPECSINTACT system generated print files. One concern was that when a Job is printed many files are generated and may be a problem for input into PD2. One big file that contained all the information in a Job (sections, tables of contents, submittal register) may be preferable. The downside of the one big file is that it would be slow to load and manipulate.

ACTION: EG&G will investigate and report on Microsoft Word's ability to merge multiple documents into one or manage multiple documents in a set at the next board meeting.

MASTER TEXT ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

David Maltby - EG&G

David Maltby demonstrated sample HTML documents for viewing on the World Wide Web, and discussed the merits of several other data formats, including PDF, SGML, and plain text.

ELECTRONIC DATA FORMATS

Roundtable Discussion

On several occasions, the board discussed the preferred data format for SPECSINTACT documents in the following situations:

- Incorporating the specifications into PD2
- Downloading documents for editing from the World Wide Web
- Viewing documents on the World Wide Web
- Distributing documents through the National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS)

The formats considered were PDF, HTML (the format of most Web documents), SGML, and Microsoft Word format. EG&G agreed to further investigate these formats and their applicability.

CORPS DISTRIBUTION METHOD TO NIBS FOR CCB

Jim Quinn - Army Corps of Engineers (COE)

The COE and NIBS are testing a new distribution method that uses the COE web site for the distribution of COE specs to NIBS. NIBS will use the change document to identify the specifications to download for placement on CCB. The release files will be placed on the web site quarterly for publication on the Construction Criteria Base (CCB).

The Army and NASA will soon adopt the new masterformat numbering system. A lengthy discussion was held regarding the section number and section title that each agency will use in their master text database for the reference organizations.

ACTION: Army and NASA will change the section 01090 "Sources of Reference Publications" to 01420 "References" to coincide

with Navy and the current software.

CCB PRESENTATION

Earle Kennett - NIBS

NIBS made, presentation regarding the current number of subscribers, status of the CCB Web site, and future use of Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) format. Currently there are 4400 CCB subscribers. The web site has seen a lot of usage recently. Last month, their website received 45,000 hits. NIBS will be testing the new (DVD) format. It will enable them to put all CCB data, which is currently on multiple CD's, on one DVD. They will produce the first DVD for the 4th Quarter 1997 CCB and will produce CCB in dual formats, CD and DVD, for about two years or until users have purchased the new DVD hardware.

NIBS is currently converting CCB documents from ASCII to PDF and is on track for releasing CCB in PDF format in October 1997.

Friday, April 25, 1997

SPECSINTACT TRAINING

Alice Butler - NAVFAC

Alice talked about her recent classes. She discussed the NCTAMS LANT SPECSINTACT courses that have been conducted. She has taught in excess of 450 students in the last six months; 50% of these students are from the Navy, and 50% are from A/E's. She noted that students have liked the software better with each new release.

MASTER TEXT STANDARDIZATION

Pat Robinson - EG&G

Pat handed out a document covering non-SGML to SGML conversion problems. Specific issues are covered in the attached document; recommendations covered within were generally accepted. Pat stated that automated conversion is about 95% accurate, with the remaining 5% of each section requiring some manual adjustment. It was suggested that Master Text publishers pay close attention to the validation logs that are generated during conversion. Before final publication of a set of guide specifications, the publishers should ensure that each section has no tagging errors reported when loaded into the SGML editor, and that no validation errors are reported on save.

Placement of brackets in master text was discussed. Improper bracket placement can have incorrect effects on the formatting and tagging after the bracketed text is edited. This will be particularly noticeable when an interactive "replace bracketed text" feature is implemented in the editor.

ACTION: The master text preparers for Navy and Army specifications will contact Tom Adams for guidance concerning converting to SGML format.

CHANGE REQUESTS

Pat Robinson - EG&G

All new 1620's were thoroughly discussed and a decision was made on the action required. Disposition of reviewed Software Change Request Forms.

UNRESOLVED DRAWSPEC ISSUES

Jim Whitehead - EG&G

Jim discussed the format of key numbers used to link DrawSpec drawing components with SPECSINTACT specifications. He recommended that these key numbers contain a prefix to uniquely identify the master when pulling a SPECSINTACT job based upon the key numbers in a set of CAD drawings. Jim stated that the SPECSINTACT software could pull sections from the default master, if no master prefix was specified, but that this would not work when sections were being pulled from more than one master.

It was agreed that the key numbers would have a two-digit prefix, one digit of which would uniquely specify the master. The remainder of the key number would consist of five digits for the specification number, and an as yet unspecified number of digits for identifying a specific key word within the specification. It was further agreed that the key number extension should be adequate to facilitate an eventual link between DrawSpec and existing job costing software. The format for the key number extension will be determined in late May by SPECSINTACT users from NAVFAC, COE and NASA, as well as users of existing CAD and job costing software.

Ford Chinworth requested that displaying the master prefix be optional within DrawSpec, and EG&G agreed that this should be possible. Ford also stated, that implementing tailoring options should be a higher priority than DrawSpec, because DrawSpec would rely upon the use of tailoring options. The board agreed with this assessment.

ACTION: Greg Covington (Triservice CADD/GIS) will coordinate a meeting with NAVFAC, COE, and NASA to determine if the cost listing can be used as the key number.

TAILORING OPTIONS

The board discussed several issues pertaining to tailoring options, concluding that any text tagged with unselected tailoring options should be deleted rather than hidden, and that the SPECSINTACT software should warn users whenever tailored text would be deleted automatically.

ACTION: Jim Quinn and Carl Kersten will submit, in electronic media, samples of tailored sections to EG&G.

DISCONTINUANCE OF DOS DATABASE

Round Table

The board discussed ending maintenance of the DOS database. The board will set a date for discontinuance after the NAVFAC user survey results are available, at which time users will be notified.

ACTION: Army will no longer distribute the DOS database in Jan. 1998. The last issue of the Army DOS database will be the Oct. 1997 disc. NASA will discuss this issue at the May NS meeting to determine when the DOS database will be discontinued. NAVFAC will set a date after the results of the NAVFAC survey have been analyzed. EG&G will disseminate this information on the SI Web Site, the newsletter, and in flyers to NIBS.

STATUS OF WORDSPEC

Mike Dyer - EG&G

The use of the "Beta" designator with WordSpec was discussed. Although EG&G feels more comfortable about the stability of and data integrity within WordSpec, there has not been enough feedback from the user community to drop the Beta designation. This should be accomplished as soon as practical so that users will not shy away from a Beta product.

ACTION: Tom Shaw will produce at least one job in WordSpec and report any issues to EG&G.

DISCUSSION OF WORDPERFECT

Mike Dyer - EG&G

There was a discussion about the previous requirement to develop a WordPerfect version of WordSpec (i.e., allowing specification editing in WordPerfect with a conversion to and from SGML). The board retracted this requirement because not enough users would benefit to justify the development costs.

ACTION: EG&G will withdraw the 1620 for WordPerfect editing capability.

STATUS OF SPECSINTACT

Jim Whitehead - EG&G

Jim discussed the desirability of converting SPECSINTACT into a suite of 32-bit applications. The primary reasons for doing so would be better developer productivity with 32-bit development tools, improved performance, and more current user interfaces. The board agreed with the goal of converting to 32-bit applications, but left open for future discussion the timetable for this conversion.

Jim further discussed the conversion of SPECSINTACT documents to true SGML format, and the implementation of a new tagging scheme for tables. It was also mentioned that the board needed to prioritize several important items that were previously approved.

FUTURE DIRECTION

Round Table

The board identified the following items as high priorities for EG&G:

- Completing Tailoring Options
- PDF format conversion tasks including 1620 number 971-010
- DrawSpec development

- Implementation of new table tagging scheme
- Converting software to 32-bit

ACTION: EG&G will recommend prioritization of all outstanding, approved tasks, for board review at a later date.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 1997, and will be hosted by NASA at Kennedy Space Center, Florida.
