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Techniques and Methodology Working Group

Chairman Report

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TMWG, Paris, 13/14 November 1997

1. TMWG held its first official meeting in Paris, 13/14 November 1997. The name of the new group is "Techniques and Methodologies Working Group" (TMWG). Same basic membership as the old GE.1/AC.1 group, but with a broader scope and focus appropriate for a CEFACT working group. TMWG picked up a wealth of experience and expertise through several new participants from France, S.W.I.F.T., and United States of America. Other CEFACT members (UK and France) have indicated further increase in their membership by the next meeting.
2. As the first item of business, TMWG approved the Draft Procedures as submitted by AC.1 in order to elect its officers. Klaus-Dieter Naujok and Peter Wilson were elected, respectively, as Chair and Vice Chair. TMWG also approved the Draft Terms of Reference (ToR) submitted by AC.1. The Procedures were lodged with the ECE secretariat. The ToR were submitted to the CSG for endorsement (which was given by the CSG during its December 1997 meeting).
3. TMWG developed a statement to CSG that to make any progress in the standards development process, modelling is an absolute requirement, even if the proposal to implement an Open-edi and Object based approach is approved. Therefore, if CEFACT cannot accept a decision to require modelling for the existing and next generation of standards, then there is no need to continue the work of TMWG. However, if the decision to adopt modelling is accepted, then analysis must be done to document the impact on both resources and organisation. Based on the result of this work, then the analysis must continue to evaluate the impact on current standards and next generation standards. With respect to next generation standards, the analysis further develops the impact of Open-edi and Object Technology in terms of resource and organisation implications.
4. One priority item of the TMWG work plan is to determine which modelling technique is best suited for B&IM and EDI (current and future). Three methods have been identified for review, IDEF, UML and EXPRESS G. A special joint meeting with TMWG and NMF (Network Management Forum) will start a comparison between IDEF and OMT (UML).
5. TMWG plans to have three meetings a year, with one being tied to the dates of a JRT (EWG). The scheduled meetings for 1998 are: 23-27 March in Washington D.C., the 24-28 August in Brussels and the 30 November to 4 December in Nice.

Joint Meeting with NMF (Network Management Forum), Boulder, 8-12 Dec

6. This was a joint business modelling activity that took place under the auspices of the NMF and UN/CEFACT/TMWG.
7. The OMT modelling technique was followed in the UN/EDIFACT business case for "catalog order" so that OMT/UML might be compared against the IDEF (Integrated Definition) modelling technique used thus far in the UN work.
8. At the end of the week more work remained to be done in OMT/UML in order to complete the analysis and documentation necessary to make a fair comparison. However, the group did lay out the requirements of the UML technique for case documentation, business model and object class description that would be adequate for establishing a base for the next generation of EDI standards.
9. AC.1 (TMWG) have stating for some time, that the key to the next generation of EDI is analysis of the business requirements in the exchange of the information, and the development of common business object classes (CBOs) and their static and dynamic interaction, the same is being considered by some members of the NMF in regard to the Common Information Structure (CIS) of their CIGP project.
10. Until there is a "common ground" defined in a truly protocol neutral technique, such as IDEF/OMT/UML, each industry/sector will all have their own products that are mostly sectorial implementations not able to interface with other object oriented applications developed by other groups such as Object Management Group (OMG).

11. One of the goals of the joint UN-NMF project was to "determine if the use of Business Models using Common Business Objects will allow the mapping between the different data exchange methods, e.g., EDI, CMIP. There is now an excellent opportunity to create CBOs based on business modeling across CEFACT and the NMF. The OMT methodology is already in place within the NMF, but needs greater emphasis on CBOs, with perhaps a champion who will collect existing models and "CBOs" and set up a process for truly making them common and accessible to all participants and member companies.

12. The first step would be to progress NMF CBOs to cross-sectorial international standards under a body such as the UN/CEFACT. TMWG feels that the ultimate goal for ubiquitous information exchange lies in international co-ordination of CBOs and related models.

13. Some members have the view that even if different modelling techniques were to continue to be used for a while, NMF, ITU-T, UN/CEFACT, and domestically in the USA T1 and X12 could all start now to bring CBOs together and create an international standard class library. CBOs are independent of the underlying modelling technique.

14. By the next meeting of TMWG the group will complete their work on the OMT/UML model of the "Catalog Example". It will serve for TMWG (and SITG) as a comparison to IDEF and a possible decision which modelling technique should be embraced by CEFACT and UN/EDIFACT.