Relationship Between MTA-NA and the MDC, MTA-International, and LUGs

by Kristi Hanson

The MUMPS Development Committee is pivotal to the growth and evolution of the language we use called M or MUMPS. The same is true of M Technology Association-International in that it has influenced and spread the global awareness of M. Local user groups (LUGs), too, carry on the work of M at the local level. M Technology Association (MTA) members and M Computing *readers often hear about these groups and know of their value, but the actual workings may be a mystery to many, whether newcomer or old-timer. If you have resolved to be more familiar with the work of the MDC, MTA-I, or LUGs in 1995, this article is for you.*
—Editor

MTA and the MDC (MUMPS Development Committee)

The MDC is a separate and autonomous entity that shares with MTA the common goal of advancing M Technology. MDC's purpose is to develop on a continual basis the M language and obtain approval of revised versions as federal, national, and international standards.

At the request of MDC, MTA provides administrative support through the MDC Secretariat. The secretariat is located in the MTA headquarters and is responsible to the MTA director.

Membership

Members of MDC are organizations, which assign representatives to participate in M language development. There is no automatic or reciprocal membership connection between MTA and MDC, although most MDC members and their representatives also elect to be MTA members. There are currently sixty-two members of MDC.

Background

Active since 1971, the MDC is fully responsible for M language development. It is the sole body officially recognized by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) as responsible for advancing the M language specifications. It is an open membership body whose language development work is performed by the voluntary efforts of its members. The MDC generates some revenue for itself through annual dues (currently $100) and nominal meeting fees. It has no formal organizational structure to make contracts, receive revenues, or manage programs.

MDC holds two or three meetings a year, including one just prior to MTA's Annual Meeting, to consider proposed technical revisions to the language. When the MDC formally adopts (each member has one vote)a set of revisions as a proposed "standard," the secretariat undertakes the procedures necessary to earn ANSI approval. MDC gained ANSI approval of the first M language standard in 1977 and of subsequent revisions in 1984 and 1990. The most recent MDC revision includes full support for transaction processing, a binding to SQL, and enhancements supporting multiple linguistic representation simultaneously. This revision is on its way to ANSI for consideration.

In November 1994, ANSI approved MDC's proposal for an M language binding to the ANSI Standard Graphical Kernel System (GKS).

MDC is working toward ANSI approval for three other standards: Open M[UMPS] Interconnect (OMI), a computer communication method giving differing M language implementations and other computer languages access to M databases; an X Window System binding that defines a functional interface between standard M routines and the X Window System; and the M Windowing API (MWAPI), which adds capabilities to develop and operate graphical user interface (GUI) applications.

MTA and the MTA-I

The MTA-I (M Technology Association-International) (formerly MUMPS Users' Group-International Federation) was established to make "decisions which affect all of the worldwide MUGs [MUMPS Users' Groups], such as the authorization of new MUGs, the provision of quality control over MUG services worldwide, and mutual recognition of MUG membership. . .in the interest of all MUGs" (*International Federation Treaty*).

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The treaty states that MTA-NA (North America) shall provide secretariat services to the MTA-I without charge. This includes distribution of information (such as meeting and other informational memos from the president, meeting minutes), maintenance of membership information, and supporting member and potential member involvement.

Membership

MTA-I membership is open to national and multinational entities with at least one hundred dues-paying members and sufficient dues to provide such services as distribution of an M technical journal, translation of M publications, provision of M Technology materials and information to its members, and local promotion of the technology.

Member entities are allotted MTA-I votes in proportion to their paid membership, with each entity allotted at least one vote. If any member has more than 50 percent of the total federation votes, the chairmanship alternates between that entity and others. MTA-NA has held more than 50 percent of the votes since the federation's inception.

Current voting members are the M associations of Europe, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, North America, and the United Kingdom and Ireland. M users in Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, the former Czechoslovakia, Russia, and Spain also have participated.

MTA and the LUGs (Local Users' Groups)

There is no legal connection between MTA and local M users' groups. MTA does offer, however, such support as issuing guidelines for establishing a LUG, supplying copies of various MTA publications for distribution at LUG meetings, referring members and the general public to LUGs and listing information about LUGs in MTA publications. The Membership Director is the liaison between MTA and LUGS. MTA encourages LUGs to provide their member lists to MTA and to promote membership in MTA at their meetings. MTA maintains an active file on LUGs and promotes them in MTA's member kits.

There are local user groups in the Baltimore-Washington area, the Boston area, the Delaware Valley area, central and southern Florida, Hawaii, Los Angeles, Minnesota, Georgia, the Pacific Northwest, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Dallas-Fort Worth, New York City, and upstate New York.   **M**

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