

# 1997 Association Meeting

*In accordance with the bylaws, an Association Meeting is held during the Annual Conference to announce results of the Board of Directors election, report on MTA financial status, and conduct other appropriate member business. Following are minutes from the meeting, held Tuesday, May 20, at 8:30 A.M. in the Hynes Convention Center, Boston.*

- Board Chair's Perspective: A bittersweet year
- Treasurer's Report: Financial status better than expected one year ago.
- Volunteers: The heart of MTA
- A new M for the object world: MDC's Omega may be in testing by this time next year
- *M Computing*: Aiming for WWW interaction and more management and internationalization content
- Report from German MUG: Upcoming June meeting
- Straw Vote: Come back to Boston, join with another trade show, or return to the stand-alone M conference?

### **Board Chair's Perspective: A Bittersweet Year**

Board Chair John Covin reminded participants that last year with DCI (Database & Client/Server World sponsor) was a first, a huge departure for MTA and the culmination of several years of strategic planning. "M Technology has been moving from a closed environment to a very open one, and the technology has thrived," he asserted.

Mr. Covin announced that, on the positive side, the demand for M programmers has grown as much as 20% this year, according to some M watchers. And MTA-Europe is moving forward with plans for an October 21-22 meeting in Brussels. [Note: The MTA-Europe meeting dates have since changed to October 28-29.]

But, he reflected, the past year in the life of MTA Board members wasn't easy. At this time last year, the Board was faced with the dilemma of whether to hold an Annual Meeting in 1997. The Board and staff managed through "dire circumstances": a 50% scaleback in staff and office space.

In a conference call last week, the Board of Directors were "surprised" by MTA staff's optimism about the quality of this year's meeting and the potential for meeting the registration goal. The Board had established conference registration as a measure of how well MTA is doing. They set a goal of 280 paid registrants, and at the end of the first full day of the conference, had realized 277, with more expected throughout the week. "The Board is excited about where we are, though of course we'd like to have even higher attendance at this meeting," he told conference participants. "We're asking you, was this meeting in conjunction with DCI a success, did we meet our objectives?"

Mr. Covin went on to say that from a business standpoint, MTA's revenues derive primarily from membership and the Annual Meeting. He summarized that in the early days, there was a close, cohesive group. Then, in response to member demand, MTA began attempting to promote M Technology, which had been viewed as a niche technology. At the same time, attracting attendees to the stand-alone meetings was growing more difficult.

In a series of strategy sessions, the Board determined that meeting with a prominent computer show would offer attendees, with one trip, the same benefits from the Annual Meeting plus exposure to other technologies M users need to learn about. It would put our conference, and our technologies, in the mainstream.

"Last year on the Database & Client/Server World expo floor, we could take pride in our vendors going toe to toe with any other vendors," he stated. "DCI liked our bringing stability, authenticity. It was a rousing success."

"The Board wants to listen to members," he said. But if the Board responded to every member's recommendation, "we might satisfy you in the short term and not in the long term."

"Next year, if all things are the same as now, we'll come back to Database & Client/Server World in Boston. But we may not. We have to adjust our sails—we cannot control the wind. Should we go back to a closed environment?"

"This is a volunteer Board which takes its job very seriously. We had a bittersweet year, very rewarding," he concluded.

Covin then responded to a question from the audience:

**Q:** "Is MTA seeing a decline in membership?"

**A:** "Not as dramatic as the decline in Annual Meeting attendance. In strategic planning, the Board discussed the value of membership. It's hard to compete with the corporations. Antrim has some fifty M programmers, Sunquest has hundreds, but the number that can come to an Annual Meeting is very limited. Those companies can do a lot of things that MTA used to do for their employees."

### **Treasurer's Report: Financial Status Better Than Expected One Year Ago**

Treasurer Elliot Shefrin reported that the results from 1996 contain good news and bad news. "The overall picture is far from rosy, but there are signs for cautious optimism," he said. "We did better than expected at this time last year. We made some hard decisions to moderate the financial impact." He noted that strong advertising revenues and slashed meeting expenses helped the budget. The year ended with the highest ratio of fund-balance-to-operating-expenses since 1992, with over five months of operating funds in the fund balance.

Mr. Shefrin stated that MTA's 1997 budget is very conservative in all revenue projections. "We expected a \$17,000 loss. We took critical decisions and mid-course corrections as needed; we are monitoring our progress and adapting. And as of the end of April, we are comfortably ahead of budget."

### **Volunteers: The Heart of MTA**

#### ***Board of Directors Election***

(MTA is served by a totally volunteer Board of Directors)

Board Chair John Covin acknowledged the Nominating Committee for this year's election: Don Gall, Chairman, and committee members Greg Kreis and Catherine Pfeil.

He thanked the Board members who stood for re-election: Dave Holbrook, Elliot Shefrin, John Glaser and Rick Marshall.

Covin informed the audience that "There were no new candidates even though we put out the call. Last year we invited brand new candidates to run for the Board, and when they saw the books, they said no!"

He announced the 1997-98 Board of Directors:  
John Covin (Covance, Inc.), Chair  
Dave Holbrook (InterSystems Corp.), Vice Chair  
Don Gall (Omega Computer Systems), Executive Director  
Elliot Shefrin (NIH Gerontology Research Center),  
Treasurer  
Richard Davis (Mformation SYStems), Immediate Past  
Chair

<http://www.mtechnology.org>

John Glaser (Partners HealthCare System), Voting Board  
Member

Bob Mappes (Micronetics Design Corp.), Voting Board  
Member

Rick Marshall (Department of Veterans Affairs, Seattle),  
Voting Board Member

Gregg Seppala (Department of Veterans Affairs,  
Washington), Voting Board Member

### ***Conference Volunteers***

Kristi Hanson, MTA Senior Associate, spoke for the MTA Board and staff in expressing gratitude to each member of the Steering Committee and Program Committee. She said that in her work with other non-profit organizations over the years she has never witnessed the high level of dedicated and productive volunteerism that MTA members exhibit.

She congratulated the Steering Committee for vigorously highlighting M's strengths in connecting with other technologies, particularly the Internet. Ms. Hanson described Susan O'Gorman (Synertech Health System Solutions), Steering Committee Chair, as the captain whose steady and enthusiastic hand kept the ship well on course. "Gardner Trask (Eclipsys Corp.) played a dentist's role," she said, "pulling teeth to nab top notch presenters for the hottest topics and developing, with the help of the Program Committee, an up-to-date and comprehensive program." Gail Penrod (Brigham & Women's Hospital) made sure the conference offered a central hub where conferees could network and relax throughout the week. And Rick Sulzer (KB Systems) led the planning for vendor involvement in the Solutions Center.

Hanson acknowledged the Program Committee's essential role in producing the conference: Yefim Kogan and Pete Rose (Kogan-Rose Associates), Tutorials; Dave Whitten (Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Houston), Discussion Sessions; Peter Crowley (Sea Change Systems), Vendor Involvement; Anne Klein (Dept. of Veterans Affairs), VA Coordination; and Stefanie Simkins (CompuSearch), Newcomers' Reception.

### **Report from MUG Germany: Upcoming June Meeting**

Dr. Wolfgang Giere, from the J.W. Goethe University Medical Center in Frankfurt, pointed out that the German organization is still a MUG, not an MTA, and announced their next meeting, June 12-13 in Hamburg. He invited persons to attend with the inducement that "It will be cheap," because they "have the use of warehouses in Hamburg where M is used."

## M Computing: Aiming for WWW Interaction and More Management and Internationalization Content

The 1997 *M Computing* Executive Editor, Dr. Valerie Harvey from Robert Morris College, expressed a debt of gratitude to predecessors Dr. Richard Walters and Dr. Ruth Dayhoff. Dr. Harvey noted that "the changing conditions of M Technology and the M community open up possibilities of different formats for materials in the journal," and encouraged all to contribute ideas. She sees the vitality of the Web and the Internet as a resource for *M Computing*, with the potential for building articles from discussions on the net, for example. In response to the question "Could we put some success stories on the web?", Dr. Harvey said "Yes. MTA is always interested in publishing success stories on the web and in the journal. We also need more of a management viewpoint and more internationalization."

### A New M for the Object World: MDC's Omega May Be in Testing by This Time Next Year

MDC (MUMPS Development Committee) Vice Chair Rick Marshall, from the Seattle IRM Field Office of the Department of Veterans Affairs, announced MDC's "spark of excitement for our technology."

"The MDC has been working since 1982 toward the best way to bring object orientation into M," he began. "Last year, the Europeans noted that M wasn't originally designed with OO in mind, and they offered a proposition: 'Let's do a new M, building it from the beginning around objects rather than strings.' This allows a simple architecture."

Mr. Marshall outlined the four-part MDC approach to this task: 1) Introduce OO; 2) Make OO easy to produce: start with M architecture and just change what's needed; 3) If Omega is an extension to M, they must work easily together — easy to call each other, interoperability. And finally, "In 1967, when M first emerged, developers were aiming at an empty industry—there was no software designed for medical applications. There's no such vacuum in 1997; it's a crowded world. We need to create a language that really enjoys all those other languages—they're opportunities. So part 4) is: Position this new technology so it's capable of being expanded into other directions."

Marshall emphasized that MDC is working in consultation with the non-M OO community, including academics who are experts in the state-of-the-art. "We'll steal the strengths of other languages, target their weaknesses," he said.

He responded to two questions from the audience:

Q: Where do you stand with vendor support?

A: So far, very good.

Q: When will this be shrink wrapped and ready to go?

A: We intend to have the first draft by September. It should be ready for testing perhaps six to nine months later.

### Straw Vote: Come Back to Boston, Join with Another Trade Show, or Return to the Stand-alone M Conference?

In conclusion, John Covin told the attendees that "Board members need to be good listeners" and invited their comments during and after the conference on three questions in particular: "How do you feel about this meeting? What direction do you think MTA needs to go? Should we go back to road shows—bring good tutorials to you?"


He conducted a straw vote, asking the audience to indicate by a show of hands their preference among four future annual meeting options, with these results:

- 1) Return to Boston with Database & Client/Server World, 41%
- 2) Similar arrangement but with different computer show, 12%
- 3) Similar arrangement but with HIMMS, 6%
- 4) Return to the stand-alone conference, 11%

Thirty percent of those present did not vote for any of the above options.

The audience endorsed Mr. Covin's closing expression of appreciation to fellow Board members and MTA staff with a standing ovation. **M**

*Minutes submitted by Kristi Hanson, MTA Senior Associate*



**Harvard Pilgrim Health Care**

INCLUDES  
Harvard Community Health Plan  
Harvard Community Health Plan of New England  
Pilgrim Health Care

**M[UMPS] Positions for Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Boston, MA**

Junior level programmers to Senior level Programmer/Analysts and Systems Analysts are needed. Some of the positions that are more Junior will involve company sponsored training. There are a total of six positions to be filled.

Perform M[UMPS] programming and analysis supporting business needs for an integrated medical records, billing and appointment scheduling system within a DEC Alpha/Unix environment. May work on projects relating to GUI development. Familiarity with client/server environments and HL7 data transfer protocols is desirable. Project leadership abilities are desirable.

Needs to work proficiently with the clinical system end users to analyze business requirements. Provides detailed functional and technical specifications based upon analysis. For immediate consideration please fax resume to J. Dakin (617) 676-3832 or mail to Harvard Pilgrim Health Care 100 Hayden Ave., Lexington, MA 02173