

Omega

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.

M

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