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FROM THE EDITOR**In this Issue . . .**

by Valerie J. Harvey



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Distance Learning for M

Dick Walters shares insights gained through experience with the University of California at Davis' (UCD's) Internet-based M instruction course. Distance learning, using various formats and technologies, has been important to M Technology in the past and the Internet techniques Dick Walters has worked with show promise for delivering M learning where and when it is needed. The evaluation of the UCD project reveals comparative information on the time demands for independent learning of M for on-campus and remotely located students. Only a few colleges and universities offer M courses (either in the regular curriculum or as continuing education), and a scheduled course is only of use to persons living in the vicinity of the institution offering the course. Organizations using M Technology need support for new employees (and for employees reassigned to work with M) that is more flexible and independent of geographical location. This article updates us on the progress in making M instruction available with new technology.

ESI's Object Technology Approach

The MTA Outstanding Member highlighted in this issue is ESI Technology Corporation. Terry Wiechmann describes ESI's strategies for a seamless integration of M Technology and the object paradigm, providing perspective on the need to accommodate the object paradigm in M Technology and the ways this has been achieved in ESI's product suite. ESI has had success in developing a conversion path for databases and applications utilizing M-based FileMan technology.

Year 2000 I: Year 2000 Problem in M Environments

As we get closer to the year 2000, there is increasing focus on processing of dates. Chris Bonnici, MIS Manager for the Malta Branch of Royal Insurance, summarizes the sources of the Year 2000 software difficulties, both technical and organizational, and suggests specific approaches for M technology applications. This article offers utility conversion routines.

Year 2000 II: FileMan Date Format - Past, Present, and Future

FileMan's date format and the routines that support it are ready for the year 2000, according to George Timson, even though the Smithsonian Institute might not be able to use FileMan to catalog artifacts according to dates in the distant past (such as the Cretaceous-Tertiary period, rarely used in banking and

health care). This FileMan column provides help in locating all occurrences of date-type fields in a file or subfile and guidance in dealing with differences in treating the instant of midnight in different database products - does the very moment of midnight belong to the concluding day or the new day? George answers this question!

Year 2000 III: Some Web Sites

For those who are interested, here are a few Year 2000 sites to consult:

<http://www.year2000.com>—Peter de Jager's Year 2000 Information Center™ site, with information on technical progress, certified software, and solutions vendors. Among the topics treated there: de Jager's Project DAMOCLES and a recently posted article on the "Mac-Gyver Solution."

<http://www.msa.org/Year2000.html>—detailed information from Roleigh Martin is available at this Minnesota Software Association's site on embedded programs that might affect electric power generation. The site has links to the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) site at <http://www.epri.com/y2k/> and to Martin's own home page. Through this site you can obtain access to Martin's paper, "Systems Threat to Core Infrastructure Services."

<http://www.yardeni.com>—this site gives the viewpoint of Ed Yardeni, who is Chief Economist of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell in New York. This home page has a pointer to his "Y2K Problem" page.

Standards I: MDC Briefs

This issue's MDC Briefs column focuses on a proposed resolution to the "Library" controversy in the MDC. A standard M library facility would add to the value and portability of M applications requiring string processing and mathematics operations.

Standards II: What Is It Worth to Have Standards?

Art Smith helps us imagine how we can assess the benefits (as well as the costs) of standards. Given the resources necessary to maintain a standards effort that serves M Technology it is important to have a sense of value for standardization. While the impact of standards maintenance and progress on M system developers is obvious, the indirect impact on users of the technology can be seen in considering the alternative: what costs would these organizations face without a standardized M Technology?

Standards III: Anticipating Change

Ed de Moel points out how difficult it is to work "prospectively" in the standards arena—to try to develop standards in such a way as to meet current and anticipated needs when the use of technology changes as rapidly as it does. He reviews the impact and significance of some of the prospective standards development work that has been undertaken by the MDC. **M**

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