

Whither the MTA?

by Chris Casey

[Reprinted with the kind permission of MTA United Kingdom & Ireland from their October 1998 newsletter, *M Technology News*, Vol. 3, Issue 1]

Hopefully by now there will be no one in the M community who has not heard of the purchase of Micronetics by InterSystems Corporation on June 19th this year. Indeed, for some people, this event will have occupied a large proportion of their waking lives over the past few months. Whilst not being quite that dramatic for MTA officials worldwide, it has certainly been on their minds.

A lot of choices have to be made, and the Board members cannot make these choices alone. YOU have to get involved and make YOUR wishes known. Who am I talking to? Every person who is reading this newsletter! This is your association, and you have to decide what is going to become of it.

What are these choices? Putting them quite simply "What is the future of the MTA? Is there a future at all?"

Looking back, some of the key roles of the MTA have been:

- to provide an independent view of the competing vendors
- the presentation of balanced news items
- the organization of meetings for people to come and compare the vendor's offerings.

Is there any purpose to the MTA now that there is no internal competition between M vendors?

Let's take a look at some of the options:

1. We could all simply say that there is no longer any vendor selling Mumps, pack up and go home.
2. Become an InterSystems appreciation society making sure that everything we say is "nice" and conforms with "marketing speak."
3. Remain fiercely independent, publishing only articles from die-hard "pure Mumpsters" criticizing every attempt to make M compete in the real world against the mainstream database vendors. (In other words become an Oracle/Sybase etc. support group.)
4. Face up to reality. Accept that InterSystems is now solely responsible for the commercial future of Mumps (oops, sorry, did I mean Caché Objectscript™) and work in partnership with them for the common good.

The above obviously highlights some of the extremes in order to get the point across (but don't for a moment think that there are not people who would agree whole-heartedly with one or other of the above, because I have heard each of the above views stated). The reality is probably somewhere in between . . . or is it? The only way for the Board to know is for you to tell us. There are several ways for you to do this — write, ring, send an email or turn up at the AGM (Annual General Meeting) on 27th November and join in the debate in person. Better still write AND turn up.

For what it's worth, and just to put my money where my mouth is, here are my **personal** views . . .

- InterSystems is the future for Mumps/M/MSM/DSM/Caché etc. If we want the best database language to succeed commercially (so that we can continue to work with it) we all need to work together with them.

- The MTA must retain its independence and provide a balanced commentary on events. This means that we can all join in the cheering when InterSystems win a big contract to replace an Oracle or Sybase system but we can also give the view from the coal face, warts and all (for instance, our ongoing article from Cambridge Goodfellow).

- The MTA should get more involved in canvassing the opinions of its members. It should then publicize the results and act as a conduit in passing this information to InterSystems, reporting back to members on any progress made.

- What do we call ourselves? Frankly I don't care. I remember only too well the endless debates (usually going on at MTA events until well into the early hours) the last time that the organization changed its name. I would vote for leaving this particular issue until next year.

So what do you think? Do you agree with everything that I have said or do you have views of your own? Do you have ideas of ways in which the MTA could better serve its members? Tell us now. It may be your last chance! **M**

Chris Casey is editor of the MTA U.K. & I newsletter. You may send your comments to info@mtaui.co.uk
