

... You Better Start Swimmin' An Environment of Change

by Art Smith

"Come gather round people wherever you roam and admit that the waters around you have grown . . . Then you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone. For the times they are a-changing."

—Bob Dylan, *"The Times They Are A-Changing"*

I don't know about the rest of you, but I am definitely feeling "drenched to the bone!" The good old days of being just an M programmer seem to be a thing of the past now. In my job today, I need to know HTML and JavaScript and am learning more about XML. I've had to dredge up my C programming skills and expect to need either C++ or Java in the not-too-distant future.

We are simply not an island any more. All of us need to develop our skills—and learn how M ties in with all these new technologies. The good news is that M does an outstanding job of cooperating with other technologies, with more "interlinks" coming along all the time.

So how do we keep ourselves educated? The first thing I would recommend is to make a point of attending the MTA's "Strategies and Solutions" conference this September 27-29 in San Diego. I

know already that there will be a number of good presentations on how M can grow beyond a simple "roll-and-scroll" terminal-based system to interact with all sorts of new technologies. These presentations will include classes, roundtable discussions, demonstrations, etc. Add to that the chance to talk with the people who are actually doing this now, and you have a meeting that you can't afford to miss!

Despite nearly everyone's fears that having just one large vendor in the M community would stifle all forward progress, things have continued to move forward. Recently (as I write this in late April) InterSystems (www.intersys.com) has released new versions of their products. ESI (www.esitechnology.com) has come out with a new version of ESIOb-jects—their object oriented system built on top of M. And perhaps most interesting of all—there has been a great deal of effort put into developing an "Open Source" version of M. GUM (Generic Universal MUMPS) has taken off in a big way, and continues to grow. I don't think it will be long before we have a fully functional implementation of M available in the open source format. For more information you can query the Majordomo listserver that serves



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this project. Send e-mail to Major-domo@ldl.healthpartners.com with the body consisting of just "INFO GUMP" (without the quotes). More active participants are always welcome in this project.

Near and dear to my heart is the MDC's work in this growth. The Omega working groups continue to make progress on an object oriented language. There have been many good ideas hanging around in this project for a number of years. At the meeting we held in New Orleans in March, this group was able to pull a lot of that together. We hope to actually be able to unify these ideas soon—we expect to make progress on that this September in San Diego! In addition, the MDC as a whole is moving towards approving a single document as the "Millennium M Standard"—this standard already exists as the collection of approved modifications to the previous standard, but this needs to be pulled into a single new standard document. We hope to have that document approved soon—maybe at the September meeting.

Once it is available, we expect to make the new M standard and the new Open MUMPS Interconnect and M Windowing API standards available to MTA members. We anticipate making these available

for access and possibly download from the members-only section of the MTA web page. While we haven't worked out the details yet, we expect this to be another valuable benefit to joining the MTA. It is possible that older standards may be made available this way, also, though there are some issues to resolve first.

It looks like we'll have lots to talk about at the September Strategies and Solutions meeting! I hope to see lots of you there. So break out your old Bob Dylan records (or Simon and Garfunkle, Peter, Paul and Mary, or whomever's performance you prefer!) and get with the changes. I'll see you in San Diego! **M**

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Not planning to come to MTA's Strategies & Solutions Conference?

Care about your future? Give it a second thought.

I'm not coming because . . .

5. I didn't need the InterSystems' Developers Conference and I certainly don't need this one.

On second thought . . .

5. But where else can I pick up what I missed at InterSystems plus other technology tips to put M and Caché on top of the wave? Are they right when they say, It's a tsunami—ride it or get swamped?

I'm not coming because . . .

7. Face-to-face networking is passé. The Web is all I need.

On second thought . . .

7. Some say that what's passé is Web interaction only—that human interaction isn't archaic, it's the latest post-Web discovery! I did read in *Computerworld* that "Interacting with people who have experienced what you're trying to do is still the best way to understand a problem." (Andrew Borts, member of an AS/400 user group, *Computerworld*, 12/7/98)

See the inside front cover for more Second Thoughts...

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