Newsletter

Centre for SOFTWARE Engineering

Information Overload

By Robert Cochran

This issue of the Newsletter marks a further stage in its evolution. Over recent months we have revamped the style and layout, in order to give it a fresher more modern look. We hope you agree, and like the new style. With this issue we take the evolution a stage further.

Given the frenetic pace of our industry, a constant point of feedback to us is the need to keep the material sent to our clients as brief as possible, since people feel they have less and less time to digest the material which crosses their desks, no matter how useful. On a wider scale, there is the danger that we are all so busy with what we're doing that we don't devote enough time to why or how we're doing.

We have therefore taken our cue from this, and restructured the material to be composed of shorter items which can be quickly scanned for the most relevant material. Allied to that, we will be continuing to enhance the range of information available through our web site or by means of the range of both specialist and open mailing lists we maintain.

To balance this, we are producing more specialist material which will be particularly relevant to certain people. An example of this is the new European-wide software engineering newsletter "Software in Focus" which we are producing on foot of a contract from the EU. This can be downloaded freely from our web page, and is also being sent directly in paper form to CSE Associate Member companies.

Contents

Announcing ESPINODE Ireland

By Joc Sanders

The European Commission has awarded the Centre for Software Engineering the contract for managing a new project called ESPINODE Ireland to support process improvement in the software community in Ireland (North and South), which will run for 2 years from 1st May 1998. ESPINODE Ireland will provide a range of general services to the software community, as well as providing special services to those who are undertaking, or have undertaken, EU funded Process Improvement Experiments (PIEs). The Software Industry Federation will assist in delivering the services in Northern Ireland. We expect these general services to include the following:

- Disseminating software process improvement (SPI) experience through workshops and mailings.

We will organise free public 'PIE Showcase' seminars every 6 months, at which Irish and overseas PIEs will present their experience, and distribute free 'Resource Packs' each quarter summarising valuable information about selected SPI themes.

- Maintaining an 'Irish Directory of SPI Resources', accessible through the World Wide Web, and organising a local SPI Email discussion group.

The directory will contain listings of useful SPI resources, including references to public domain information, classified listings of trainers and consultants in Ireland who can support your SPI efforts, and an events diary.

- Providing a 'Software Process Training Brokerage' service.

We will survey software process training needs, and use moderated email services to stimulate the market for public training, making it easier for training consumers to get details of courses meeting their needs, and easier and cheaper for training providers to reach interested consumers. Unlike the earlier ESPITI project, training delivery will not be subsidised.

Associate Members of CSE will be notified automatically when these services become available. If you are not already an Associate Member, please register your interest with Fiona Clince (fax 01 704 5605, email fiona@cse.dcu.ie). Service providers who would like to be included in the Irish Directory of SPI Resources, or to take advantage of the Software Process Training Brokerage scheme, should also register their interest with Fiona.

SPIRE UPDATE

by Jill Pritchet

The SPIRE project has reached the next important stage. Those Companies that successfully completed the Initiation Phase and submitted Project Plans for approval have now been evaluated. From the 20 original applicants, 14 companies have been offered funding and have been, or are in the process of being, contracted for the Improvement and Dissemination phases.

Many of the Improvement Projects have already started and the participants will shortly be attending a Regional Participant Workshop to share their experience as work gets underway. The time scales are tight but everyone is very committed to completing their projects in the time allowed. The Mentors have also been contracted to carry out the next stage of mentoring with the successful companies.

Work has also started on the deliverables from the SPIRE project including the **Best Practice Guide** which will provide practical guidance based on real experience in SSDs. The guide will be used across Europe by other SSDs embarking on improvement projects. The **Case Studies** will be developed at the end of the Improvement Projects in late August.

All of these documents will be made available through the SPIRE web site which can be found at

 http://www.cse.dcu.ie/spire

Subscribe to CSE Online

The CSE Newsletter will soon be available from our website http://www.cse.dcu.ie. To receive notification of new issues and other CSE announcements, subscribe to our mailing list by sending an email to:

maiser@cse.dcu.ie

The contents should be as follows:

subscribe csenews
exit

A message will be emailed to you as confirmation of subscription.

We would encourage you to contact us to discuss issues arising from articles in this newsletter or with any other queries you might have, all CSE emails follow the same pattern, *<firstname>*@cse.dcu.ie.

ISO 9001 for Small Companies Programme (ISCP4)
by Jill Pritchet

If you are considering implementation of a Quality System, whether or not you want to go for ISO certification, then CSE can help. Starting in September 98 CSE will be running, for the 4th time, the very successful ISO9001 for Small Companies Programme.

The programme combines classroom training with individual assistance. Your organisation will have access to CSE's experienced tutors, who will be able to help you solve any problems you may encounter. CSE will also carry out a pre-assessment audit to ensure that your organisation complies with the standard, before you seek certification from an external body, if that is what you choose to do.

Implementing a Quality System and achieving certification by the cluster method affords many benefits. You will have the support of the group which will allow mutual sharing of experiences as the programme unfolds. To ensure that each organisation achieves its targets, the number of places on the cluster is limited to 10 organisations employing 30 or less IT staff.

The course is registered with FÁS - The Training and Employment Authority may grant aid attendance on this training programme by qualified applicants under the FÁS Training Support Scheme.

For an application form or to discuss the programme in more detail contact Jill Pritchet at CSE on 704 8055, jill@cse.dcu.ie

DSDM in Ireland

By Jim Rook

The Dynamic Systems Development Method (DSDM) is a Rapid Application Development (RAD) method. It was first launched in January 1995 in the UK and is available in the public domain. It is now in use in organisations throughout Europe, the USA and Australia.

DSDM recommends the application of a series of principles, which provide a fast and effective way to develop systems within limited deadlines and manpower resources. However, it is primarily a framework, or 'methodology' rather than a method populated with a full set of products/deliverables. It can be used on its own or in conjunction with a structured or in-house method, in which the detailed techniques of the existing method may be selectively applied to implement DSDM.

Due to the growing interest shown in DSDM in Ireland, the Centre for Software Engineering has established the Irish DSDM User Group in collaboration with the DSDM Consortium in the UK.

The objectives of this User Group are to:

- Collate experiences and good practices in DSDM usage
- Promote the effective use of DSDM
- Assist in the dissemination of information regarding DSDM
- Act as a support group for new and potential members of the DSDM Consortium

DSDM User Group meetings will be held every 3 months. These afternoon meetings will include presentations on aspects of practical experiences of DSDM, followed by a discussion session.

Irish DSDM User Group meetings are an excellent opportunity for individuals and organisations that have an interest in RAD, to gain and share significant information, and to make contact with other organisations with a similar interest in these methods.

The last User Group meeting included representation from 10 organisations. A survey of participant needs was undertaken with regard to establishing the importance of various topics associated with DSDM. The top five topics among the participants were identified as follows:

- Estimating
- JAD Workshops
- Project Management & Planning
- Configuration Management
- Requirements Management

These topics could become the focus for future User Group meetings. Other topics that might be addressed in future meetings could include aspects of DSDM such as Timeboxing or Teamwork. Also, if anyone is willing to present his or her experiences of DSDM at these meetings, we would be delighted to hear from you.

In addition to the User Group meetings, we have established an electronic mailing list for the discussion of DSDM topics. If you wish to be added to this list please contact us.

The next User Group meeting is scheduled for 6 July. More details will soon become available on our WWW pages at http://www.cse.dcu.ie/cse/events/events.html.

Further details on DSDM and the Consortium can be found on the DSDM Consortium's WWW pages at http://www.dsdm.org

Jim Rook, Centre for Software Engineering, is the co-ordinator of the Irish DSDM User Group. Telephone: 7045640 or email: jim@cse.dcu.ie.

Dynamic Systems Development Method

PUBLIC EVENTS LISTING 1998

June

4th June
Six Thinking Hats Workshop
Presented by The Edward de Bono Foundation
Contact: Jim Rook, CSE - 7045640
jim@cse.dcu.ie

17th June
Release Strategy Workshop
Contact: Michael O'Duffy, CSE - 7045427
michael@cse.dcu.ie

18th - 19th June
Version Control Workshop
Contact: Michael O'Duffy, CSE - 7045427
michael@cse.dcu.ie

23rd - 25th June
Year 2000 Software Testing Workshop
Insight Consulting and the Centre for Software Engineering
in association with Systeme Evolutif
Contact: Joc Sanders, CSE 7045428
joc@cse.dcu.ie

July

1st - 2nd July
Project Estimation Methods
Contact: Jim Rook, CSE - 7045640
jim@cse.dcu.ie

6th July 1998
Irish DSDM User Group Meeting
Contact: Jim Rook, CSE - 7045640
jim@cse.dcu.ie

Autumn/Winter

3rd September 1998
UML User Group
Contact: Jim Rook, CSE - 7045640
jim@cse.dcu.ie

The dates for the following events are to be confirmed

An Introduction to UML
Contact: Jim Rook, CSE - 704 5640
jim@cse.dcu.ie

Requirements Prioritisation Workshop
Contact: Jim Rook, CSE - 704 5640
jim@cse.dcu.ie

Object Oriented Metrics Seminar
Contact: Jim Rook, CSE - 704 5640
jim@cse.dcu.ie

Use Case Seminar
Contact: Jim Rook, CSE - 704 5640
jim@cse.dcu.ie

Configuration Management Seminars and Workshops
Contact: Michael O'Duffy, CSE - 704 5427
michael@cse.dcu.ie

Function Point Analysis MkII Workshop
Contact: Jim Rook, CSE - 704 5640
jim@cse.dcu.ie

DSDM Practitioner Course
Contact: Jim Rook, CSE - 704 5640
jim@cse.dcu.ie

Facilitation Skills Workshop
Contact: Jim Rook, CSE - 704 5640
jim@cse.dcu.ie

Product Quality Seminar
Contact: Michael O'Duffy, CSE - 704 5427
michael@cse.dcu.ie

Software Failures Workshop
Contact: Michael O'Duffy, CSE - 704 5427
michael@cse.dcu.ie

Usability Workshop
Contact: Michael O'Duffy, CSE - 704 5427
michael@cse.dcu.ie

Innovation and R+D Management Course
Contact: Michael O'Duffy, CSE - 704 5427
michael@cse.dcu.ie

Details of CSE events and registration forms are also available on our website: http://www.cse.dcu.ie or from info@cse.dcu.ie