

Floor Discussion

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The first paper, which was presented by Fred Conrad of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, discussed the heuristic approach to testing a software's usability. The heuristic method of usability inspection does not require the use of staff with 'specialized knowledge', can be less expensive, and less time consuming than traditional 'end user' testing.

The second paper, which was presented by Martin V. Appel of the Bureau of the Census, discussed the plans for developing a unified data/Metadata system at the Census Bureau. The paper described the plans from various perspectives, and concluded with recommendations about what should occur next, in order to implement the Metadata system.

The third paper, 'Metadata Access on National Networks: The Hiperbase Approach', was not presented by Maria L. Machado Campos of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, due to her absence from this session.

Wouter J. Keller, of Statistics Netherlands, opened the floor discussion with a comment for the need to 'standardize' the data definitions within the Metadata libraries. Martin Appel responded that, even though unique standard data definitions would be desirable, they are not a requirement for the Metadata system. Mr. Appel went on to say that Metadata repository tools will aid in the standardization of data definitions, however, the enforcement of standardization is a Bureau 'policy' issue.

Paul Zeisset, of the Bureau of the Census, asked Fred Conrad whether an 'end user' test of the system evaluated using the heuristic method would still be necessary to determine if the heuristic approach was a success. Mr. Conrad replied that they will, in fact, test the results of the heuristic evaluation with a 'variety of sources'.

Mike Colledge, of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, concluded the floor discussion by commenting about the 'Metadata System' paper, which was presented by Martin Appel. Mr. Colledge articulated that his organization began implementing a similar system two and half years ago, and that they found it necessary, due to problems discovered during data manipulation, to place 80 percent of the data into one physical 'data warehouse'. During the 'loading' of the data into the warehouse, they again encountered problems. These quandaries discovered at loading time, were resolved first in order to place the clean data into the warehouse, and thereby, alleviated problems before the data was manipulated by the users.