

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENTERPRISE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

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SELECTED PAPERS BOOK

A number of selected papers presented at ICEIS 2002 will be published by Kluwer Academic Publishers, in a book entitled Enterprise Information Systems IV. The selection will be made among the papers actually presented at the conference, based on a rigorous review by the members of the ICEIS 2002 program committee, and it will be validated by the conference program co-chairs.

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FOREWORD

This volume contains the proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Enterprise Information Systems (ICEIS 2002), organised by the School of Informatics of the University of Castilla La-Mancha (Spain) in collaboration with the School of Technology of the Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal (Portugal).

Following the line started in 1999, ICEIS aims at becoming a major point of contact between research scientists, engineers and practitioners on the area of business applications of information systems. This year, four simultaneous tracks were held, covering different aspects related to enterprise computing, including: "Databases and Information Systems Integration", "Artificial Intelligence and Decision Support Systems", "Information Systems Analysis and Specification" and "Internet Computing and Electronic Commerce". All tracks focus on real world applications and highlight the benefits of Information Systems and Technology for industry and services, thus making a bridge between Academia and the Enterprise world.

Following the success of 2001, ICEIS 2002 also has a number of satellite workshops, related to the field of the conference. This year we collaborated in the organisation of the following four international workshops: PRIS-2002 (the 2nd workshop on Pattern Recognition in Information Systems), held in Alicante, and NDDL-2002 (the 2nd workshop on New Developments in Digital Libraries), SIS-2002 (the 1st workshop on Security in Information Systems) and WIS-2002 (the 1st workshop on Wireless Information Systems), these three held in Ciudad Real.

ICEIS 2002 has received about 220 paper submissions from more than 30 different countries, from all continents. Only 89 papers were published and presented as full papers, i.e. completed work (8 pages in proceedings / 30' oral presentations), although some more papers, reflecting work-in-progress or position papers, were accepted for short presentation or poster presentation. These numbers, leading to a "full-paper" acceptance ratio below 45%, show the intention of preserving a high quality forum for the next editions of this conference. Additionally, as usual in the ICEIS conference series, a number of invited talks, including keynote lectures, case studies and technical tutorials were also held. These special sessions, presented by internationally recognized specialists in different areas have definitely contributed to increase the overall quality of the Conference and to provide a deeper understanding of the Enterprise Information Systems field.

A short list of papers will be selected for a book, "Enterprise Information Systems IV", to be published by Kluwer Academic Publishers during 2002. It will be the fourth book in the series of ICEIS selected-papers books.

The program for this conference required the dedicated effort of many people. Firstly, we must thank the authors, whose research and development efforts are recorded here. Secondly, we thank the members of the program committee and the additional reviewers for their diligence and expert reviewing. Thirdly, we thank the invited speakers for their invaluable contribution and for taking the time to synthesise and prepare their talks. Fourthly, we thank the workshop

chairs whose collaboration with ICEIS is much appreciated. Finally, special thanks to the all the members of the organising committee in Ciudad Real and the steering committee in Setúbal, especially to Marcela Genero (UCLM-Ciudad Real) and Vitor Pedrosa (EST-Setúbal) for their help in solving so many details with the secretariat and preparation of the conference.

We wish you all an exciting conference and an unforgettable stay in the lovely city of Ciudad Real. We hope to meet you again next year in Angers (France) for the 5th ICEIS, details of which are in http://www.iceis.org.

Mario Piattini UCLM/Ciudad Real

Joaquim Filipe EST/Setúbal

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CONCEPTUAL ARCHITECTURE FOR THE ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF SOFTWARE MAINTENANCE

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Software Process Assessment, Software Process Improvement, Maintenance Software, MOF, XMI.

Abstract:

The management of software processes is a complex activity due to the great number of different aspects to be considered. For this reason it is useful to establish a conceptual architecture which includes all the aspects necessary to be able to manage this complexity. The fundamental element in all conceptual architecture is constituted by meta-data, which, organized in different levels of modeling, can be used to manage effectively the complexity of the software processes and especially the maintenance process (Pigosky, 1996). In this study we present a conceptual architecture of 4 levels to represent and manage the assessment and improvement of software process by means of the definition of the appropriate models and meta-models. This architecture is based on the standard MOF (Meta object Facility) proposed by the Object Management Group (OMG,2000). In particular this architecture includes all the necessary aspects for carrying out the assessment and improvement of the Software Maintenance Process (SMP) and allows us to represent the different data and meta-data used in its management by means of the modeling of concepts at different levels of abstraction: meta-models of generic processing, models of software processes, concrete software processes (in our case, that of the assessment of other processes) and instances of carrying out a specific process. As a support to this architecture we present MANTIS- Metamod, a tool for the modeling of software processes based on the concepts discussed previously. MANTIS- Metamod is a component of MANTIS, an integral environment for the management of the SMP, including its assessment and improvement.

1 INTRODUCTION

Until recently software construction was performed like an artistic task where success in projects depended principally on the "art" of the developers and not on projects being developed with an engineering arose, the principal objective of which is to obtain quality software products. A fundamental element which affects the quality of the products is the way of developing and maintaining them, that is to say the processes involved both in the development and the maintenance of the software. According to ISO 12207 norm, a process is a set of interrelated activities which transform inputs into outputs (ISO/IEC, 1995). A process defines who is doing what, when, and how to obtain a specific objective. Software processes are inherently complex. They involve many people, each with individual responsibilities and skills, and they

produce or modify an ample range of elements (Becker & Webby, 1999).

Current efforts in the investigation of software processes focus fundamentally on their assessment and improvement. Software process assessment can be defined as the set of activities to evaluate the given process. The assessment aims to inspire the confidence that the product will be of the quality desired. With such an aim in mind, different standards have been proposed, such as CMM (SEI, 1995), BOOTSTRAP (BOOTSTRAP, 1993), SPICE, IEEE 730 (IEEE, 1998), etc, which provide a framework for the assessment of the quality of software processes. SPICE stands out especially among these initiatives, having formed the basis of ISO 15504 (ISO/IEC, 1998a).

In order to be able to apply plans for improvement in the software processes of an organization it is essential to carry out beforehand an assessment process of their quality. The

improvement of software processes is based on guaranteeing certain results from the process, and as such it is necessary, in the process of assessment, to take effective measures of certain indicators associated with the processes.

Given the importance of improvement and hence of the assessment of the quality of software processes, it is important to be able to treat all the concepts involved in these processes in an integrated way. To do so it is useful to establish a conceptual architecture with encapsulation layers which can be specified, designed and constructed independently. To achieve integration, different levels of abstraction must be defined, and hence it is useful to make use of the ideas put forward in the different standards concerning meta-modeling and the exchange of meta-data, among which the MOF (OMG, 2000) and XMI (OMG, 1999) stand out.

In this study we present a conceptual architecture of 4 levels, based on the standard MOF, for the effective quality assessment and improvement of software processes. This architecture is being used in MANTIS, an integral environment for the management of the software maintenance process. The elements considered at each level of abstraction are based on widely accepted proposals which will be discussed in the following sections.

The structure of the study is as follows: first we give a general description of the conceptual architecture proposed. In the next section we describe each of the levels and their mappings in detail. In section 4, we present a tool which automates the management of meta-data at different levels of abstraction, and finally, in section 5, we present conclusions and plans for future studies.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE CONCEPTUAL ARCHITECTURE

The current study is within the framework of MANTIS (Ruiz et al. 2001) which attempts the definition and construction of an environment for the integral management of the SMP. MANTIS defines the way in which the SMP is organized, managed, measured and supported.

For the management of the SMP, MANTIS integrates, amongst other aspects, people (with certain skills and who carry out certain roles in the project), techniques (or methodologies) employed by the people, tools (which help them to meet the standards) and activities (in which teams participate, and which help them to meet significant milestones).

To achieve integration, 4 conceptual models are defined in MANTIS, based on the standard MOF (Meta Object Facility) for object oriented metamodeling (OMG, 2000) proposed by the Object Management Group. MOF is a model for specifying, constructing, managing, exchanging and integrating meta-data in software systems allowing a flexible integration of systems. MOF describes an abstract modeling language in line with the core of the UML (OMG, 1999a). Table 1 shows the 4 levels of the architecture MOF and its adaptation to MANTIS.

Level	MOF	MANTIS
M3	MOF-model (Meta-Metamodel)	MOF-model
M2	Meta-model	Generic SMP metamodel
M1	Model	Process Software Assessment concrete models
M0	Data	Instances of Software Process Assessment (real- world concrete Software assessment projects)

Table 1: Conceptual levels in MOF & MANTIS

At level M0 are the results of the application of an assessment process to a maintenance project. That is to say, at this level there would be the results of a process from which it would be possible to establish its strong and weak points. The data handled at this level are instances of the concepts defined at level M1. The specific model used at level M1 is based on a specific model for assessment following ISO 15504, which will be discussed in more detail in the sections below. Level M2 corresponds to a generic meta-model of software processes. In this meta-model all the elements common to any type of process are defined. In our case, this meta-model must include abstract concepts from which it will be possible to derive the concepts handled in the assessment model. For example the generic concept "Activity" used in M2, would be instanced in the concepts "Define the input of the Assessment" or "Perform the Assessment Process" of level 1, which at level MO will correspond to the application of such activities in a specific organization, on a specific project.

At the final conceptual level of MANTIS, M3, the generic meta-data of software processes is represented in the form of model-MOF. A model-MOF is basically formed from two types of objects:

MOF-classes and MOF-associations (these are the main objects for us, although others do exist: packages for re-use, data-types etc.) Hence, all the concepts represented at level M2 are now considered as models of MOF-classes or MOF-associations. For example, "Activity", "Actor" or "Attribute" will be instances of the MOF class; and "Activity uses Resources" or "Artefact_is_input_of_Activity" are instances of MOF-association. For the effective representation of the meta-data which make up this conceptual architecture and above all to ensure their portability between tools in a Software Engineering Environment (SEI), which is what we are interested in MANTIS, we use XMI (XML Meta-data Interchange) (OMG, 1999b), a language based on XML (eXtensible Markup Language).

3 LEVELS AND MAPPINGS

3.1 M2 level: Generic Software Process Metamodel

At level M2 of conceptual architecture the generic meta-model of software processes is represented, from which concrete models of processes can be instanced. The meta-model of this level is based on the proposal of the IESE (Institut Experimentelles Software Engineering) (Becker, & Webby, 1999) which represents a generic schema for the modeling of software processes, in which a fundamental aspect of these processes is presented: the measurement. The main aspects to be taken into account when modeling processes are:

- how things are done,
- who does them and
- what is produced, used or modified during the activity.

In figure 1 the basic components which should be included in any model of processes are shown in more detail. As can be seen from figure 1, within the schema which represents the generic meta-model of software processes, three subschemas stand out:

- Software Process Modelling subschema,
- Measurement subschema,
- Human Resources subschema

3.1.1 Software Process Modeling subschema

This subschema is made up from the necessary constructors to define models of software processes. Every model of processes is made up of a set of activities, which in their return can include other activities. An activity is an abstraction of "how things are done". An activity is a step in a process

which may contain anything from activities of software development or maintenance to project management or quality assessment activities. The superclass entity represents an abstraction of an element of a model of processes. The subclasses of entity are: project, activity, artefact, resource, agent. The same entity could be involved in more than one project.. Among the other classes which stand out in the meta-model are: the class agent, which is an abstract class that describes the human agent who does one or more activities; the class resource, which describes entities necessary for carrying out the project; and the class artefact which is an abstraction of the products which are modified, used or produced in a project. Another significant of this subschema is that using it we can represent the relationship between entities. The interrelationships between entities of the process are modeled using the class relationship. It is equivalent to association MOF, but with the difference that they can have a degree greater than 2 (ternaries, etc.) and that this class relationship models relations between instances of entities and not between instances of class MOF (the level of abstraction is different).

3.1.2 Measurement subschema

A fundamental element when modeling software processes is to be able to define a set of metrics which will then allow us to check how things are being done. For the software engineering to be considered as such, it is essential to be able to measure what is done. Therefore, we must include in the Generic SMP Meta-model the possibility of defining indicators when modeling processes. These indicators must allow us to check the quality of these processes in order to be able to apply improvement plans.

For this reason, in figure 1 we can clearly distinguish the subschema of the measurement which includes the aspects related to the measurement of processes. As seen in the subschema of the measurement, each element or the model can have certain attributes associated with it. Examples of attributes are: the duration of an activity, the number of derived errors, process indicators, (properties of a process). Each attribute can have a possible value or set of values associated with it, and in addition the calculation of the value of an attribute can be based on certain expressions. The same expression can be associated with various attributes. This subschema serves as an effective complement to the generic meta-model of software processes it makes possible the application at an inferior level of specific models of processes such as assessment and improvement.

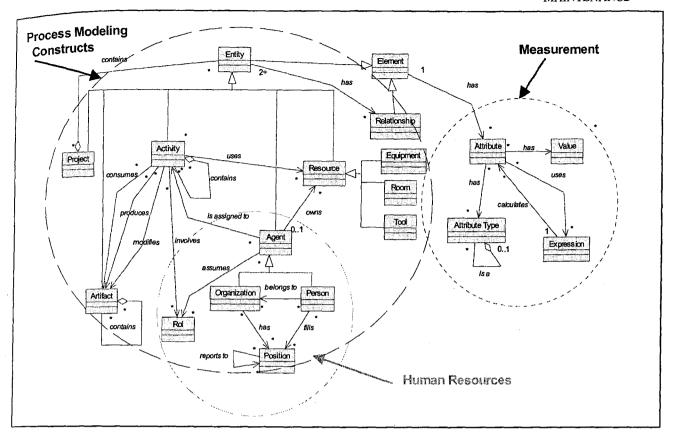


Figure 1: Generic Metamodel of software processes

3.1.3 Human Resources subschema

This subschema is outstanding in the meta-model since human resources are the key element for performing successfully software processes. With this schema we can model in detail who is performing the activities. In this subschema the following classes stand out:

Role: this is an abstraction of some abilities and necessary conditions to perform an activity. Each activity is associated with certain roles in the project and these roles can only be assumed by human resources.

Organization: this describes the context from the administrative point of view in which the software process occurs. Examples of organization are the software development team, the testing team or a software development company.

Person: this is an individual human agent, for example a programmer or a software engineer. A person can belong to several organizations such as in the case of a programmer who takes part in the development team and the testing team in the project. Besides, all people have a position in an organization, for instance the manager's position in the testing team.

Position: this describes a post in an organization. A person can perform several positions and a position can be performed by several people.

3.2 M1 Level: Software Process Assessment Model

The process model to consider in this level is based on the assessment model proposed in part 5 of ISO 15504 standard based on the first proposal of the SPICE project. SPICE is a major international initiative to support the development of an International Standard for Software Process Assessment. The main goal of this project, to develop a working draft for a standard for software process assessment and their documents have been carried through the international standardization process and have been published as ISO/IEC TR 15504. This norm defines a two dimensional reference model for describing processes through assessment of process attributes structured into capability levels (ISO/IEC, 1998b). The process dimension in which the measurable aims which each process should attain and its functional character are identified, and the ability dimension which is based on assessing and attributes the group associated with each process to determine its ability which is necessary for its management and its improvement.

ISO 15504 provides the guidance to perform a software assessment process and a method for continually improving processes. In M1 Level we focus on the guidance that ISO provides with regard

to the assessment process. The main activities that ISO identifies to assess a software process are the following:

Planning, Collecting data, Validating Data, Process Rating and Reporting. As a consequence of performing these activities, certain products are created (as shown in the software processes generic meta-model) amongst which the report stands out that shows the assessment result of a process (process profile).

In table 2 the correspondences are shown between the elements of software processes metamodel (constructors of process models) and the main elements of the assessment process defined in ISO 15504- part 3.

The basic concepts of all assessment processes are shown in brief in table 2. The assessment process implies:

- Defining process input
- Performing the process. This means performing the planning, collecting and validating the necessary data, assigning the process rating (levels that identify the process ability according to SPICE defined levels)
- Creating the appropriate reports and,
- Recording the relevant output

Assessment process output is formed by the process profile. In this artefact all data related to the assessment of a specific process are recorded.

With this model, the tools used in the lower level to perform specific assessment processes could exchange their data efficiently. These data can even be useful for improvement plans. The elements of this model could be formed into two groups:

Assessment Input Information, describes the purpose of the assessment, its range and its limitations.

Assessment Output Information, describes the structure of assessment processes shown in SPICE. It includes a process profiles group and ratings of ability levels for each process.

In figure 2 you can see the UML diagram corresponding to the structure of an assessment process output according to ISO 15504. As it can be observed, all necessary elements to record a software assessment process based on ISO 15504 standard are shown in the assessment results model. The key element of assessment process output is the Process Profile element that includes information about who performs the assessment process, strong and weak points of the process to assess, the level of process ability and especially the results of process indicators defined in SPICE (PA 1.1, PA 2.2, etc) and the ratings that have to be fulfilled by these indicators. The output of the assessment, in the form of a process profile, shows the adequacy ratings of the generic practices of the process, but it does not show why a particular practice was assigned a particular rating. Indicators help to identify what is present or missing from a process or work product and provide guidance to the assessor when assigning a rating of adequacy to a practice. The information provides an 'indication' of the extent to which a practice supports the purpose of the process. The

M2 Classes		M2 instances (M1 Classes)
A	Activity	Defining the assessment input
		Perform the assessment process
		Planning
		Collect Data
<u> </u>		Validate Data
		Process Rating
		Reporting
		Record the assessment output
Art	Artifact	Process to Assess
		Process Profile
A contains A	Activity contains Activity	Perform the assessment process contains Planning
		Perform the assessment process contains Collect Data
}		Perform the assessment process contains Validate Data
1		Perform the assessment process contains Process Rating,
		Perform the assessment process contains Reporting
A consumes Art	Activity consumes Artifact	Perform the assessment process consumes Process to
		Assess
A produces Art	Activity produces Artifact	Perform the assessment process produces Process
<u> </u>		Profile

Table 2: Mapping between Generic SMP and Assessment Model

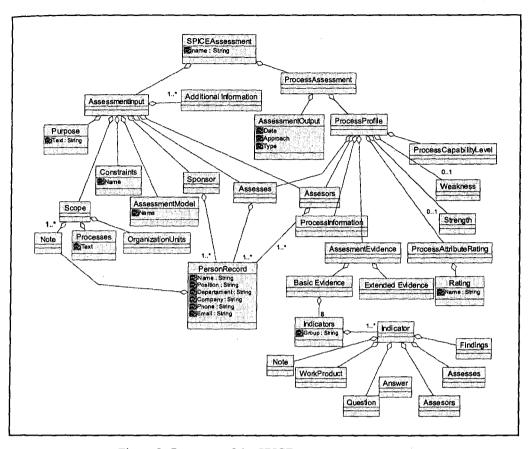


Figure 2: Structure of the SPICE assessment output

detailed information collected during the assessment about the presence or absence of specific indicators provides the valuable input into analysis and process improvement planning.

3.3 M0 Level: Concrete Data

At this level, there are the concepts related to the application of a specific assessment process following the guidelines of its assessment model defined in the higher level (M1). An example of this level is the following: 'Planning of the assessment process of the software maintenance process carried out in the Company Example S.A'. Besides, it includes all data shown (according to the pattern indicated in the process profile) during the assessment process to control how the maintenance process is carried out in this company. These data correspond with the indicators defined in the higher level. For example if 'Maintenibility' is defined as an attribute of process, this attribute will have a specific value in this level.

4 WORKING WITH ALL THE CONCEPTUAL LEVELS

With the aim of carrying out an effective management of metadata in the different abstraction levels, using an intuitive and easy form of working with the correspondences among different levels and to represent these meta-data in an open way for their exchange, MANTIS-METAMOD (Garcia et al, 2001) has been developed. The aim of MANTIS-METAMOD is to manage the meta-models definition (level 2 MOF) and models (level 1 MOF) and to represent them in an open way.

The following figure 3 shows how MANTIS-METAMOD displays the correspondence between the generic metamodel of software processes and the process assessment model appearing in the previous section.

To represent in an open way metadata, MANTIS-METAMOD uses a manager of a repository of metadata stored according to XMI Standard (OMG, 1999b). With the use of XMI it is possible the information about models and metamodels can be exchanged among tools that use

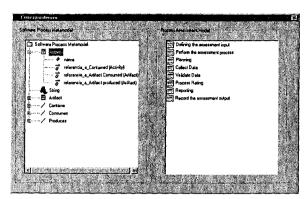


Figure 3: View of MANTIS-Metamod

this open format. This increases to a great extent the ability of integration with other tools and environments. With MANTIS-METAMOD has been possible:

- to represent the conceptual architecture mentioned before and
- to store it in a consistent way. It can be easily updated for changes in the process generic metamodel or in the assessment model.

The figure 4 is a scheme of the tool based on its storage layer and which sums up the previously mentioned concepts.

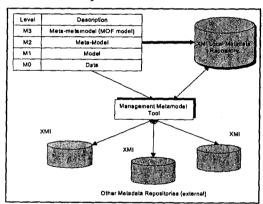


Figure 4: Mantis-METAMOD storage layer

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this work a conceptual architecture based on MOF standard for the effective management of the software assessment process has been shown. In this architecture the assessment model based on ISO 15504 has been integrated according to generic metamodel builders of software processes defined by IESE. This architecture has been used in the MANTIS environment to apply assessment concepts and process improvements to software maintenance.

The performance of a good assessment process is an essential aspect to apply improvement plans in the software processes of an organization. Therefore, the effective management of the assessment process is fundamental for its success when it is put it into practice. With the generic model of software processes defined in level 2 of MOF rank it is possible to define any model of software processes. Therefore several assessment models of software processes could be defined in which elements of previous versions are being refined, obtaining in each version a more effective assessment model. All these models can be processed in an integrated and consistent way since their elements are examples of the concepts defined in the generic meta-model of level 2. For an automatic management of models and meta-models according to these architecture, the tool MANTIS-METAMOD has been developed. With this tool, the models and meta-models defined in the form of XMI documents can be exported or imported. This makes possible the collaboration of MANTIS with any other meta-modeling tool based on MOF, permitting the sharing of different defined models and meta-models.

6 FUTURE AND RELATED WORKS

Very recently has been published the OMG SPEM (Software Process Engineering Metamodel Specification) (OMG, 2001). This document is an OMG Final adopted specification whose FTF recommendation and report will be published in July, 1, 2002. SPEM is based on the definition of the minimal set of process modeling elements necessary to describe any software development process. In general, all software process metamodel should include the three basic elements exposed in this paper: modeling constructs, human resources and measurement. In SPEM this elements are included and it would be very useful considering it as our generic software process metamodel (level 2) when this specification will become a standard.

Other work to take into account is the study of the possibility of using UML profiles in order to define the metamodels used in level 2. For example, SPEM is defined both as a metamodel (as the metamodel used in this work to model software processes) and as a UML profile.

Beside among our future studies is important to emphasize the need for:

The implementation in MANTIS-METAMOD of the correspondence among the levels M1-M10 managing the relationship between the elements of the

- processes model defined in M1 and its performance in level M0.
- Refining and improving the assessment model of software processing through the definition, testing and validation of a group of software process metrics.
- Integrating in conceptual architecture in level M1 an improvement model of the software maintenance process based on ISO 15504 which uses the results of the assessment process to improve the ability of an organization for maintenance when they carry out their processes (Niessink, 2000).
- Creation of tools in level M0 to collect and to manage automatically the performance of an assessment process and software processes improvement in an organization (Park & Kyung, 2001). For instance, using DTD's proposal of these authors to represent as XML documents the results of the assessment.

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