Results from the Workshop on Peer-reviewed outlets for Patterns

As a result of the plenary session of PLoP that presented an overview of the C3PO exercise carried out on the patterns mailing list, a working group was formed to discuss avenues for creating additional peer-reviewed outlets for patterns work.

The first meeting (moderated by Brian Marick) focused on establishing the goals of the working group. The results (in no particular order) were:

1. Improve Quality of Life for people who are building software development organizations
2. Create a way to validate patterns through user feedback (e.g. something like the book reviews on Amazon.com)
3. Generating good pattern languages
4. Increasing the number of authors of pattern languages
5. Increasing the number of people who are reading patterns
6. Creating an academically respectable outlet for publishing patterns
7. Determine if the above is a trivial problem
8. Create academic respectability for PLoP
9. Establish agreed-upon foundations for the patterns literature
10. Provide a locus of dialogue to build the foundations above
11. Create a Patterns Manifesto (e.g. a living document that presents the current "party line")
12. Widen the channel of authoritative patterns
13. Cultivate pattern-writing talent and motivate same
14. Expand pattern publication in existing venues (e.g. special issues of existing publications)

Cope mentioned that Alexander now has his own website (www.patternlanguages.com) and is looking for volunteers and contributions. The first meeting of the working group dissolved after this list of goals was compiled.

The group reconvened the next night. Brian Marick once again moderated that meeting, and led the group to vote on which of the goals were most important to the group as a whole. The three prioritized goals that won out were:

1. Expanding patterns publication in existing venues
2. Creating an academically respectable outlet for publishing patterns
3. Increasing the number of people reading patterns

The discussions that followed focused on ways of achieving these three goals. One of the first points that emerged was that the group wanted to involve more academics in

patterns. The group agreed that this is necessary to expand both the number of readers of patterns, and the pool of patterns writers. The way to do this was described as the "Flytrap model", e.g. it's easier to lure flies with honey than vinegar. The subtext was that if we can create academic respectability in patterns then we can "lure them in" to the patterns culture and create a generally more pronounced effect on them.

Several ways of doing this emerged:

The first was that the Elementary Patterns community (Dwight Deugo, Eugene Wallingford, etc.) have seen some astonishing successes in teaching "elementary patterns" as a way to introduce first-year students to computer science. Ralph Johnson observed that a study published in CACM several years ago (~1996) on using "programming templates" in teaching first-year programming bore out these experiences. Several action items were discussed from this set of points:

1. It was concluded that one of the best ways to encourage more Universities to use this approach of teaching patterns from the beginning of a C.S. Curriculum was to create a textbook that would provide a patterns-based introduction to OO programming. This would build from the Elementary Patterns work started by Dwight and Eugene.

2. A second suggestion was that a second textbook that also took a patterns-based approach to providing an introduction to MIS would also be key. This book would focus on different types of patterns (e.g. Analysis patterns, Testing patterns, etc.) as appropriate to the topic.

Dwight and Eugene took it as an action item to investigate the first bullet item. It was mentioned that in a previous reading group that Kent Beck and Eduardo Fernandez expressed interest in the second topic, but no action items were assigned as the principals were not present.

From this the group moved on to a discussion of how to (in Ralph Johnson's words) "Create an *effective* outlet for publishing patterns". A lively discussion followed this rephrasing to the effect that "effective" and "academically respectable" were two sets that only partially intersected. The gist of the discussion was that if the outlet was effective, that academic respectability and respectability among companies that recognize publication in research journals would follow.

Ralph then outlined a proposal that in essence involved creating a peer-reviewed, web-based journal that published (on the web) on a regular basis (either monthly or quarterly). However, every year, a "compendium" of the work would be published as a book by one of the standard journal publishing houses (Elsevier, Springer-Verlag, etc.)

Several discussion points emerged from this.

Brian mentioned that several authors (Steven Harvhad?, Phil Agre, etc.) had written on the problems and benefits of web-based academic publication. He also mentioned that there was a paper in the Economist recently that discussed the issue. Ralph stated that the physics community was actually way ahead of the C.S. community in making web-based publication acceptable.

A concern was raised that adding a journal would exhaust the pool of knowledgeable patterns reviewers and detract from PloP and the other Hillside conferences. It was pointed out that a journal would require two types of review – both "patterns" review on the form and readability of the papers, and also a more traditional "domain" review to ensure that the information contained in the patterns was correct and accurate (although not original, as that is not the purpose of patterns).

It was then concluded that the problem is that we have not worked on growing the pool of reviewers for a journal of this nature. Several suggestions for growing this pool of reviewers were put forward, including starting form the PloP authors that have been published in the PloPD books.

Ralph and Dwight took it as an action item to contact the different publishers (Elsevier, Springer, etc.) and find out what options they offer for creating journals that are both web-based and printed. They would also investigate organizing a board for such a publication.

Finally, we had a discussion of encouraging pattern publication in existing journals. **Brian Marick took an action item to start looking into doing a "testing patterns" issue of IEEE Software (since he knows the editor). Kyle (with Steve Berkzuk) will contact various people (e.g. Doug Schmidt and Mohammed Fayed) to try to discover if we can do another theme issue of CACM.** We also discussed doing special patterns issues of more focused journals (like one in Parallel programming), but no action items were taken.

The PloPD5 plans have also firmed up. The current plan is to include papers from the 1999, 2000 and 2001 Hillside conferences (plus previous). The process will begin roughly a year from now. Target publication date is early 2002.

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