WG14 and the Internet

Ed Keizer
Keld Simonsen
Frank Farance
David Keaton
Peter Cordsen

ABSTRACT

This document was written as result of a Copenhagen resolution to survey the possibilities of the Internet for the working group. This document is intended for discussion and is ambiguous in places where the opinions of the authors differed.

1. Introduction

The Internet allows WG14 to reach a sizeable portion of interested parties in a quick and efficient way. We feel that when WG14 decides to use that network it has to state the goal of that use.

The goals of internal use of the Internet for the working group are fast interaction with each other, which might speed up the decision process, and easy access to WG14 documents.

The intended audience for external use is the C user community, including users, teachers and compiler writers. The goal of using the Internet to communicate for the C community is to make them aware of our existence and our plans (public relations) and allow feedback from the user community to the working group.

Documents on the Internet have their own drawbacks. There are too many formats for storing text and it is easy to present modified documents as originals.

WG14 has only limited resources, this means that we should think twice before enforcing the existence of documents in electronic form and enforcing certain formats for electronic documents.

2. Copyright

We assume that anyone publishing anything has the right to do so. There are only a few documents of which the copyright is in the hands of ISO or WG14. ISO seems to hold the copyright of: the IS, the DIS, the COR's, the DCOR's, the DAM and the AM. WG14 seems to hold the copyright of: the WD's, the CD's, the PDAM's, the RR's, the minutes and the agenda's. The exact copyright status of documents created by WG14 is vague. The ITTF has an action item on copyright issues of a number of document types.
It seems to be possible to ask the ITTF for permission to publish extracts of Standards and Technical Corrigenda.

We assume as a rule that any electronic document mentioned in this paper, except those of which ISO holds the copyright, can be freely copied and quoted for the purpose of standardization. Thus any member of the working group can

freely make copies and give them to any party with an interest in standardizing C.

This is the same rule as the rule that governs the printed ISO and WG14 documents. Providing machine-copies of the Standard to the whole C user community will undercut ISO's way of making money from standards. Also having many versions of the Standard and Rationale, all available to the general public, can cause confusion. Confusion can also be caused by modified versions of the Standard and Rationale that are presented as originals. Some people are not worried about modified versions. They point out that this has never been a problem with the publicly available Internet RFC's.

The exact status of the *Rationale* and *Numerical C Extensions Technical Report* is unclear. We would like to publish the latter, but ANSI might hold the copyright.

3. Internal use

In our opinion there are two forms of communication on the Internet that are important for internal use: e-mail and ftp.

3.1. e-mail

Keld's WG14 mailing list should be a closed forum, in the sense that only the members of WG14 are expected to read it and post messages on it. This means that we should not publish the address of the mailing list. It is possible that the current mailing list will be used by parties outside WG14 to get their foot in the door. In that case we should be prepared to find some way of moderating the mailing list, for example by only allowing posts from the members of WG14.

The mailing list is intended for informal discussions and announcements. Messages on the mailing list will not automatically be included in the WG14 paper mailings. One can of course send the same document to the convener and the mailing list.

3.2. ftp

In the June 1995 meeting WG14 agreed to use a restricted ftp site, only available to WG14 members. This ftp site can contain anything WG14 members whish to place there, provided it has to do something with standardizing C. It is probably wise to leave the maintenance of the ftp site and its contents to a single person. Any member that wishes to put something on the site, should then send it to that person.

It would be nice if that site contained some of the popular WG14 documents, like versions of the Standard, Rationale, amendments, technical corrigenda, minutes and agenda. The best format for these documents is probably ISO 646 IRV, also known as ASCII. That makes these documents printable for everyone and easily "greppable". It is up to the discretion of the maintainer of the document to make other versions available, e.g. PostScript, WP, Ventura or ISO 8859. It should be easy to recognize the available formats. It does not seem wise to make the Standard available in its original "SGML" form for the reasons mentioned in section 2.

WG14 needs a way to determine who can access the ftp site. The national bodies should play a role in this.

The maintainer of the ftp site should publish document submission procedures so that WG14 members know how to transmit the document.

94

4. External use

C is a well known language. There are a lot of people out there who want to know more about C and possibly have an opinion about C and its future. We want to provide information to these people, through the Web and through ftp sites. Our goals for providing access from the C user community to electronic documents are: public relations and feedback from that community.

4.1. Public relations

The public relations goal is probably best served by making a nice Web site for WG14. WG14 does not have the resources to convert all documents that it wants to make available to HTML format. This means that most of the documents will be available only though ftp access. Most net browsers, like Mosaic or Netscape, also allow access through ftp. We also have to decide which documents we should make available for public access.

We might also create one or more public mailing lists, for example for the press.

4.2. Which documents

Our basic attitude should be that we are willing to allow public access to every document, unless we have a good reason not to. It is very likely that there will be restrictions on what we publish. In that case we should make explicit decisions on the categories of documents we want to allow public access to. We came up with the following possible reasons to restrict access:

- It would be nice if we could allow public access to the Standard and receive dividends from that access. Because that is not possible (yet), it seems unwise to make the Standard available in electronic form. The some reasoning goes for the Rationale and Amendments to the Standard.
- We want to allow internal discussion within WG14, without having the feeling that the world is watching every word we utter. This means that we do not want to encourage access to the electronic form of every document from the printed mailing.
- At certain moments of time WG14 will have a version of C9X for public review. We would like to make those Working Draft available in electronic form. To prevent some of the problems mentioned in section 2, we might choose to only make them available in a form that con be printed, but not easily modified, like PostScript or PCL. WG14 should not make the electronic form of the final, or near final DIS form of C9X available for public access.

Some WG14 members are of the opinion that we should keep internal documents to ourselves. The minutes are a good example. There seems to be three versions: the first draft, the second draft and the final version. The first draft is sent to the WG14 email reflector. The second, possibly improved, draft is printed by ISO and WG14 and mailed to WG14 and SC22 members. The final version is the virtual one that is modified and approved by the next WG14 meeting. Some members want to publish all versions of the minutes. Some members want to publish only the final version. Others do not want to publish the minutes at all. Some of the arguments used:

- The public has a right to know.
- Hiding information serves no purpose.
- Publishing everything makes members too careful about what that say.
- Publishing everything causes confusion.
- Publishing everything serves no purpose.
- Some Usenet readers will deliberately misinterpret information.

The nice thing is that everybody agrees that internal documents can go to 'interested parties'. The discussion gets interesting when one tries to define 'interested parties'. Some take this to mean that internal documents should only be given to people who take the trouble to ask for them, for example the UK C panel. Others are of the opinion that the readers of the newsgroup comp.std.c also are an interested party.

4.2.1. Document types

The following table contains a list of document types and whether we want to allow access through a public WG14 ftp or Web site. The word 'any' under format means, any format the maintainer of the document wants to make available.

document type	public access	format
Current Standard (*)	no	
internal WD of C9X	no	
published WD of C9X	yes	PostScript,PCL
DIS of C9X (*)	no	
IS of C9X (*)	no	
Technical Corrigenda (*)	yes	ASCII,any
Draft Technical Corrigenda	yes	ASCII,any
Amendment (*)	no	
Draft Amendment	no	
Defect Reports	yes	ASCII,any
Record of Responses	yes	ASCII,any
Defect Report log	optional	ASCII,any
Rationale	yes/no	
Rationale of C9X	yes/no	
internal WD of Rationale of C9X	no	
published WD of Rationale of C9X	yes	PostScript,PCL,DVI
C9X proposals	optional	any
disposition of proposals	optional	any
accepted C9X proposals	yes	any
Charter	yes	HTML,ASCII,any
submission guidelines	no	
PR/General Info	yes	HTML/ASCII,any
Minutes	yes/no	ASCII,any
Draft minutes	yes/no	ASCII,any
Meeting Notices	no	
Position papers	no	any

Documents marked with a (*) seems to have ISO copyright. See section 2.

4.2.2. Documents we want people to look at

These are the documents, that we want in HTML form on the Web and ASCII form on the ftp site:

- General information
- C9X Charter
- Planned changes in C9X.

4.2.3. Documents to browse through

These are the documents we would like to have available at least in ASCII form on the ftp site:

- Log of Defect Reports
- Technical Corrigenda
- Record of Response to Defect Reports

4.2.4. General information

The following information should be easily accessible the Web or ftp:

- WG14- Full Name
- Name of convener. Possibly even e-mail address.
- Name of project editor? Possibly even e-mail address.
- List of Standards, TC's and amendments produced so far.
- Charter for C9X
- Schedule for C9X
- Nations involved on the work of WG14
- Names and possibly addresses of experts and/or HOD's on WG14.
- How to get involved (through National Bodies)
- Pointers to ISO, IEC, JTC1, SC22
- Pointers to other relevant work (WG15, WG11, WG20)

4.2.5. Other information

Other information can be placed on the ftp and Wed sites as well. Section 4.2.1 can be used to determine which documents can be placed on the public sites. The person maintaining these public sites has to be very much aware of copyright issues. Some of the documents in the WG14 mailing are copies of papers written for journals, categorized as position papers in section 4.2.1.. While it might be nice to put these up for public access, the maintainer of a public site has to be very careful. He or she has to determine copyright status of every document and contact the copyright holder for permission if there is any doubt. This must be done before the document is made available.

4.3. Feedback

We will need to channel the feedback from the C user community to avoid swamping WG14. We propose to channel the feedback through the National Bodies.

We propose that each National Body specifies how it wants to receive feedback. For the USA that could be to contact the X3J11 chair or secretary. For The Netherlands it could be to contact a Dutch WG14 member. It is then up to the National Bodies to decide what to do with the feedback. This, of course, does not prevent a WG14 member to take someone's issue and champion it in WG14.

4.3.1. Addresses

Several documents contain addresses, either e-mail or postal. It has been argued that we should take care in having addresses in publicly available documents. Some people are afraid of hate-mail or being swamped with questions. Others argue that it is the fate of a representative to receive unsolicited mail and that one is not obliged to respond.

4.4. ftp and web

The above text indicates that the public web site has a lot of links to the public ftp site. Therefore good coordination between the public web and ftp site is essential, possibly by having them at the same physical location. As with the internal ftp site, it is probably wise to leave the maintenance of these sites under the responsibility of a single person.

5. Other use of the Internet

We would not be complete if we did not mention the USENET news groups comp.lang.c and comp.std.c. There are no official connections from WG14 or X3J11 to those news groups. Members of both X3J11 and WG14 can post messages on these newsgroup at their own discretion. It is probably wise for any WG14 member who does post on these news groups that he or she does not speak for WG14.
It has been suggested that WG14 should occasionally place announcements on these newsgroups.

6. Recommendations

- Make a list of do's and dont's for WG14 members.
- Resolve ISO copyright issues (ITTF?).
- Resolve undecided issues in section 4.2.1, 4.2.4 and 4.3.1.
- Add to or delete from the lists in 4.2.2, 4.2.3 and 4.2.4
- Create procedures for the restricted ftp site.
- Create procedures for public ftp site.
- Create procedure for public Web site.
- All national bodies should consider handling feedback (section 4.3).