

Subject: SEEPP Working Group gets working (I hope)
Date: Wed, 13 Mar 1996 14:02:27 -0800 (CST)
From: Keith Miller <miller@uis.edu>
To: miller@eagle.uis.edu (Keith Miller),
gotterba@etsu.East-Tenn-St.edu (don gotterbarn), MELFORD@decus.org,
jclittle@midget.towson.edu, weil, burnstei, csep, allen@cse.fau.edu,
jayaramn@westminster.ac.uk, Rick@vansys.com, srs@vuse.vanderbilt.edu,
fulghum@vss.fsi.com, dphillips@cov.com, HILTON@cc.usu.edu,
swift@mitre.org, lyttle@nevada.edu, lbernstein@attmail.com,
wahl@mtsu.edu, PRP1@aol.com, NJKyle@aol.com

Dear Working Group Members:

This is a LONG email message about SEEPP and our working group on Reliability and Safety. Here is an outline of the message:

- * BACKGROUND ON SEEPP
- * OUR WORKING GROUP
- * SOME RANDOM THOUGHTS
- * HOMEWORK
- * SCHEDULE

=====

* BACKGROUND ON SEEP:

In October of 1994, the Joint IEEE Computer Society / ACM Project on Software Engineering: Ethical and Professional Standards of Practice published a call for participation. The purpose of SEEPP is given in that call:

=====

The purpose of the SEEPP task force is to document the international consensus for minimally acceptable ethical/professional responsibilities and obligations of software engineers.

=====

The scope is given as:

=====

1.0 SCOPE

[The standards to be established] shall document generally accepted principles for identifying and resolving ethical conflicts relevant to the discipline of software engineering.

Consideration shall be given to the responsibilities and obligations of the Software Engineer to peers and laypersons, employer, customer(s), the profession and society/humanity. Additionally, consideration shall be similarly given to the obligations and responsibilities of these various entities towards the Software Engineer.

1.1 GLOBAL APPLICATION

The SEEPP task force recognizes that the design, development and application of software often transcend national boundaries. We feel that it is vitally important that the global computing community have the means to insure that this project produces a product which is as reflective of the global computing community's wisdom as can be reasonably achieved. The participation of individuals from throughout the world is important to achieving this goal.

These standards are intended to document the consensus of the global

standards of conduct, and standards of practice that you think are appropriate to our working group. These could come from professional organizations, from employers, from individuals, from scholarly literature, or from the popular press.

III. I will sift through whatever you send, and I'll compile an email edited version for the whole group.

=====

* SCHEDULE

APRIL 1: Deadline for group submitting materials to Keith. At this date I'll start editing the submitted stuff.

APRIL 15: Keith sends information back to the group, organized (I hope) around standards of ethics, standards of conduct, and standards of practice.

MAY 1: Additions and corrections sent back to Keith.

MAY 15: Keith sends back an edited document incorporating additions and corrections.

JUNE 1: Group responds to the latest version.

JUNE 15: Keith sends revised document to the general SEEPP Task Force members.

JULY 15 and beyond: Task Force combines working group documents, shapes them into a coherent package, and starts selling it to IEEE and ACM.

The "beyond" includes more work for the working group, but we'll get into that later. I know the two-week rythm of this schedule sounds daunting, but we are eager to make progress after the painful delays we've experienced.

--

Keith Miller
miller.keith@uis.edu
office: (217) 786-7327
fax: (217) 786-7188

University of Illinois at Springfield
Computer Science Department, HSB 137
Springfield, Illinois 62794

software engineering community. From time to time, consensus on an issue may not be clearly recognized. Accordingly, these standards shall also document various recommended practices and guidelines when no clear consensus can be established.

=====

* OUR WORKING GROUP:

Later in the call, there was this description for our working group:

=====

Reliability & Safety	contracts, reliability thresholds
Chair: Keith Miller	in contracts, testing, risks, user
miller@eagle.uis.edu	centered design, truth in
	advertising, informed consent for
	buyers, financial support for
	improved quality, quantifying
	quality.

=====

* SOME RANDOM THOUGHTS:

I want us to begin our work by brainstorming via email about what standards we can discover and articulate that have to do with reliability and safety. Here are a few random thoughts from me:

1. "Reliability & Safety" may be too limiting. Parnas's term "trustworthiness" might improve the title of the working group. Other people might want "testing" or "software quality assurance" mentioned. Since we are talking about software engineering, I assume we will concentrate on software reliability and safety.
2. There is not a consensus on the state of the art in this field. That will complicate our task, but I don't think it makes it impossible.
3. I like the concept of "informed consent" in this area; we (generally) can't guarantee software success, but we can be candid about what we have done to assure a reasonable degree of success.

Those three points are offered as conversation starters. There is a distinction that was described in the last task force meeting that also may inform our discussion. This paragraph was drafted by Don Gotterbarn:

=====

Most professions distinguish between standards of ethics, conduct, and practice. These standards include a range of statements, Standards of ethics are generally broad and aspirational and do not prescribe specific behaviors -prevent harm. Standards of conduct are more specific and standards of practice are regulative-do not release a product which has not been adequately tested. Violating this later type of standard is generally a foundation for legal action. These three types of standards exist for people as members of a profession, employees, and as individuals. We are looking for a range of statements and examples of these types of standards as they apply to professional competence.

=====

* HOMEWORK:

I. Please send email to me that describes YOUR view of possible standards in the area of Software Reliability and Software Safety. We are brainstorming here, so don't be shy. Please aim these emails to ME, miller.keith@uis.edu, NOT at the whole group.

II. Send email or paper mail to me of examples of ethics standards,