

Introduction

Project Observatory

Project Observatory is a system of software tools, protocols, databases and agents whose purpose is to provide management with timely information about projects and resources.

The primary components of this system are

The Observatory Center, Observatory Reporter, and Observatory Archive Databases.

The RepositoryObservatoryLink, RequestObservatoryLink, and MSProject Links.

The Observatory Process

The underlying process, *Project Telemetry*, works in the following way:

1. Periodically, Project Leaders (or their automated assistants) create concise reports about their projects, which we call *project abstracts*.
2. These project abstracts are emailed to the observatory database.
3. The observatory reads these incoming messages and updates "standing" reports of current and historical information about these *projects* and their *commitments*.
4. The observatory automatically "rolls up" information from individual reports into summary reports about collections of projects and commitments that we call *Programs* and *Organizations*.
5. The Observatory automatically initiates and conducts interviews with project managers and members to collect skill and metrics information which is assembled into the reports.
6. Observatory users view the assembled information on *Dashboards*, in *Reports*, in slide-format presentations called *Briefings*, and through a variety of graphic displays. The observatory also sends email notices to alert managers to upcoming problems.

The Project Abstract

The message format used in this system is called a "Project Abstract." This is a text message formatted using XML (extensible markup language). The formatting makes it possible for a computer to break the message into its component parts. Each abstract contains the following sections.

Identification

Project Description

Table of Statistics

Written Report

Table of Milestones

Table of Issues

Table of Resource Commitments

Table of External Documents

Depending upon the source of your plan, this information may be gathered automatically or manually entered.

Role of the Project Leader

The role of the project leader is to provide the observatory with basic project information about milestones, issues and resource requirements. The Project Observatory system provides several ways to do this and a general interface for extension.

1. *Repository/Observatory Link* creates project abstracts automatically from projects published in a Project Gateway Repository.
2. A companion application, *Observatory Reporter*, allows a project leader to easily prepare project reports. This application can be run from an individual's workstation or a Domino server using Notes or Web clients.
3. A Microsoft Project addin, *Observatory Reporter for Microsoft Project 98 (Project 2000 compatible)*, defines a toolbar button that generates a project abstract directly from a project plan and sends it to the observatory.
4. *Open design*. The project abstract format is a published, XML compliant document type definition, this means that customers and can create applications that generate project abstracts using standard programming tools.

The Role of the Observatory Administrator

The job of the administrator is to provide instructions to the observatory that tell it how to organize and arrange the project information so that it is useful to the management community.

1. Managing the setup, access control, and operation of the database and its agents.
2. Defining Programs and Organizations to reflect user needs.
3. Assigning new Projects and Project Commitments to the appropriate Programs and Organizations.
4. Classifying projects and commitments in various ways to facilitate analysis. Note: This task may be done by project leaders, program managers and other analysts.
5. Managing the use the built in customization features to support the user community. This includes the addition of new data fields, and maintenance of the reference lists of capabilities, locations, and currencies.

Documentation

Documentation for this system comprises a three part System Guide available at www.marinres.com.

System Guide 1 for Administrators

System Guide 2 for Observatory Users

System Guide 3 for Project Leaders

Features of Observatory Release 2

Revision of all of the primary report forms and navigators to support the new functions.

Implemented web support for locating and selecting from very large lists of projects and members using first letter jump tables.

Additions to the Administration Form to provide defaults and controls for all the new facilities and a new button which shows the recent activity of all the agents in a single report.

Addition of a "*Dashboard Style*" customization feature that allows the system administrator to change the symbology and thresholds used on all of the system dashboard views by simply changing a table. This avoids the need to modify view formulas.

Implementation of a "*Soft-Delete*" facility throughout Observatory and Observatory Reporter so that permitted deletions can be undone.

Addition of the "*Observatory Setup Tool*" which can setup all the reports and management documents required to replicate the program and organization structure of any Project Gateway repository in a single action. This dramatically reduces the effort required to build a new observatory for Project Gateway owners.

Addition of "*My Reports*" a personal home page feature which shows all the reports and action items for the current user in a single place.

Addition of *Multi-Currency* support so that projects reported in different currencies can be combined.

Addition of the "*Archiving Facility*" which recognizes projects that have no longer been active and automatically removes them from the observatory database to the associated archive database.

Addition of the "*Library Facility*" which provides a place to store documents in Observatory. Documents can be logically associated with any project, program organization, member, or commitment. A collection of standard forms for Action Items, Change Requests, Meeting Minutes, Risk Management, Status Reports, Problems, Charters, Discussions, Web page links, and Briefing pages are included. Responses and Versioning is supported for both Notes and Web Clients.

Addition of the "*Skills Management Facility*" which collects information about skills available and skill utilization.

Addition of the "*Location Management Facility*" which allows geographic coding of projects and organizations.

Addition of the "*Resource Search and Reservation Facility*" which allows you to find and reserve resources using skill, availability, and location criteria.

Addition of the "*Export Data Facility*" which allow resource commitment information to be exported in spreadsheet and MS Project formats.

Addition of many new graphic and analysis tools including the Project History Diagram, the Milestone Viewer, the Portfolio Analyzer, the Mapping viewer, the Workload Analyzer, and the Skill Spectrum analyzer.

Addition of the "*Animation Facility*" which produces time-lapse movies of project, program and organizational workload evolution.

Addition of an "*Observatory Metrics*" facility that works in conjunction with the Project Gateway Metrics Center to collection information from all projects (from all sources) when they are completed.

Addition of the "*Briefing Facility*" which generates graphical slide show presentations of the status of work as well as very concise single page executive summaries.