SIGAda

The ACM Special Interest Group on Ada

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Dear SIGAda Members:

SIGAda 2008 took place in Portland, Oregon October 26-30. 2008 was the 30th anniversary of Steelman and the 25th of the Ada 83 standard. Our three keynote speakers all have a long history with Ada and shared their insights with the conference attendees.

Ben Brosgol, former SIGAda Chair and senior member of the technical staff of AdaCore started off the conference with his keynote address *From Strawman to Ada 2005: a Socio-Technical Retrospective*. Ben's presentation reexamined Ada history with the benefit of hindsight and assessed some of the key decisions that shaped the eventual product. He began with the requirements documents (Strawman and its successors) that laid the foundations for the entire effort and the four proposals in the design competition (the Green, Red, Blue and Yellow languages). From there he described the phases of Ada's development through to the present:

- Birth and Infancy, 1979 - 1980

- "Toddlerhood" and Adolescence, 1981 - 1985

- Maturity and "Glory Days", 1986 - 1989

- Rejuvenation, 1990 - 2000

- Life in a "Post dot-com bubble" world, 2000 - 2005

- Re-rejuvenation, 2005 - present

Ben concluded with a number of reasons for optimism in Ada's future. Ada 95 and now Ada 2005 have brought Ada to the forefront of programming language technology. Ada compiler technology is mature. Ada has unique strengths for safety-critical and high-security systems. Ada is receiving more attention and coverage in the trade press. And finally, Ada is the right language at the right time.

Joyce Tokar, the President of Pyrrhus Software, opened the second day of the conference with her keynote talk *30 Years after Steelman, Does DoD Still Have a Software Crisis?*. The crisis 30 years ago resulted from a plethora of programming languages, rapid

evolution of the computing environment, and the rapidly increasing cost of maintenance. The development of Ada was the DoD's response to this crisis. A new flavor of crisis developed in the 90's with programming in the large. Ada 95 was the culmination of the effort to make Ada a key player for complex software systems. In the new century, the crisis is about interoperability between multiple software systems to which Ada 2005 adapts to address. In the remainder of her talk, Joyce addressed the new dimensions of the software crisis: Model Driven Architectures, Service Oriented Architectures, Systems of Systems, and Enterprise Architecture. She concluded that Ada remains a good language for dealing with the latest variations of the software crisis.

Jean-Pierre Rosen, founder of Adalog, chairman of the French standardization body for Ada, and author of several Ada related books, opened the last day of the conference with his keynote *The Ada Paradox(es)*. In its etymological meaning, a paradox is a fact or statement which is true, but goes against common sense. Ada as a whole is a huge paradox: a language that was designed as a piece of engineering, with the most powerful features, after carefully studied requirements, should have replaced all other languages; however this did not happen. Jean-Pierre who has been involved with Ada since 1979, gave us his review of its development and history as a series of paradoxes. Here are a few of my favorites.

- "Taking the time to make a good language was not good for the popularity of Ada. A bad product now is more successful than a good product later."

- "The mandate was supposed to force good practices in industry. If it is required by government, it can't be good."

- "Ada was designed to actively enforce design methods. This is perceived as a burden rather than help."

- "Ada users are enthusiasts. Adavangelists can harm the popularity of the language"

- "Many people think that Ada is a language of the past. Actually, Ada was, and still is, ahead of its time."

I won't dwell on the papers presented at the conference as they were published in the Conference Proceedings—the December 2008 issue of Ada Letters. I will comment on the high quality of the presentations. The papers are also on the post conference DVD included with this issue of Ada Letters. In addition to the papers, the DVD includes all of the speakers' slides and other conference materials. And be sure to check out the photo gallery in which many SIGAda photographers covered every event from keynote to sing along and wine tasting.

SIGAda presented two Outstanding Ada Community Contribution Awards and one Distinguished Service Award at the 2008 conference. This issue of Ada Letters contains citations for these awards It is not too early to start thinking about your nominations for the 2009 ACM SIGAda Distinguished Service and Outstanding Ada Community Contribution awards. Nomination forms are available at http://www.sigada.org/exec/awards/awards.html.

A conference such as SIGAda 2008 is a considerable undertaking for volunteers. As Chair of previous SIGAda conferences I am in a position to appreciate the efforts of those who helped organize it. I would like to thank the folks who volunteered and spent many hours of their time to ensure the success of the conference. Conference Chair **Mike Feldman** did a fantastic job overseeing the entire conference process. Many were surprised by Mike's musical

talents so well demonstrated at the Tuesday evening reception. Mike led us in a sing along of pieces by Tom Lehrer and few of his own compositions. Program Chair **Leemon Baird** was responsible for soliciting, choosing, and scheduling the presentations. **Martin Carlisle**, Conference Treasurer, did his best to keep us within our budget. Publicity Co-Chairs **Michael Feldman** and **Ron Price** made sure that we were all informed of all the conference offerings. **David Cook** organized the ever popular tutorials and **Bill Thomas** put together the Birds of a Feather Workshops. Webmaster and Proceedings Chair **Clyde Roby** put in many hours on the web site and was diligent at the conference in obtaining the necessary permissions from authors to publish their papers in the proceedings. **Thomas Panfil** kept the registration system working. Tom's and Mike's jobs were made easier by the efforts of our Local Arrangements Co-Chairs, **Geoff Smith** and **Elizabeth Adams**.

We are always indebted to our corporate sponsors, without which, we would be unable to conduct a financially successful conference. As Exhibits Co-Chair, **Ron Oliver** and **Greg Gicca** organized our sponsors. I thank **AdaCore** and **Ellidiss Software** for their support.

Next year we will meet in the Tampa Bay area of Florida, November 1 – 5. As usual, SIGAda 2009 is organized by volunteers. We always welcome additional help. If you would like to help out with the planning of SIGAda 2008, please contact our Program Chair **Greg Gicca** at gicca@adacore.com He looks forward to hearing from you.

Now is the time to think about submitting a technical paper, extended abstract, experience report, workshop, panel session, or tutorial proposal for SIGAda 2009. You can find the call for participation at the conference website http://www.acm.org/sigada/conf/sigada2009.

I have had the pleasure of serving as SIGAda Chair for the past four years. SIGAda will be conducting an election of new SIGAda officers this spring for the term of July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2011. By the time your read this letter, balloting will be underway. The slate of officers on the ballot is (in alphabetical order for each position):

Chair	**International Representative**
Steven M. Lathrop	Dirk Craeynest
Ricky E. Sward	Frank Singhoff
Vice Chair for Meetings and Conferences	**Secretary**
Jeff Boleng	Ronald J. Price
Alok Srivastava	Clyde Roby
Vice Chair for Liaison	**Treasurer**
Greg Gicca	Jared S. Cagley
William O. Glascoe III	Geoff Smith

ACM conducts the SIGAda elections. General information on SIG elections was printed in the February issue of ACM MemberNet and is available online at the 2009 ACM SIG Election site, http://www.acm.org/sigs/elections, where the slates of 21 SIGs holding elections this spring are listed.

Since 1994 SIGAda has conducted an **Ada Awareness Initiative** whose centerpiece has been our professional booth display unit in exhibition halls at various major U.S. software conferences, both inside and outside the DoD arena. Via this exhibiting, SIGAda sustains Ada visibility (name recognition), provides various Ada-awareness materials such as dozens of Ada Success Stories and Ada-related CD-ROMs, and makes available Ada experts (our booth staff

volunteers) who can intelligently answer questions, provide pointers and help, and debunk the misinformation about Ada that many attendees at these shows have. Funding for taking the booth to these shows comes from the Ada Resources Association (ARA) and the SIGAda treasury. **Mike Feldman** recently took on the task of creating some new posters for the booth. Below is picture of the booth and the new posters at the SIGCSE 2009 conference held earlier this year in Chattanooga, TN. The booth will be in Salt Lake City April 20 - 23 for the 21st System and Software Technical Conference (SSTC). You can see the posters up close and download your own copies at http://www.sigada.org/awareness/posters-2009/index.html .

John W. McCormick
Chair, ACM SIGAda

SIGAda Booth in the exhibit hall at the ACM SIGCSE 2009 Conference