

MINUTES  
AIM Advisory Group Meeting  
'77 AIM Workshop - Rutgers University  
July 7, 1977

Members Present: Dr. Lindberg (Chairman), Drs. Amarel, Bobrow, Feigenbaum, Lederberg, Mohler, Myers, and Safir.

The AIM Advisory Group meeting was divided into an executive session (13:15-14:00) and a public session (14:10-15:00). The following summarizes key points discussed during the meetings but does not purport to be a complete minutes. The nominal agenda for the meeting is attached; discussion focussed on items 3-6.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- 1) There was a general discussion about how to improve the current mix of projects on SUMEX-AIM. It was agreed that the community represented quite well the significant work being done in the field, with the exception of the MIT groups, which have not been pressed for computing capacity. Nevertheless, Dr. Feigenbaum recommended that an effort be made to couple MIT activities more closely into AIM and that we search out more social/behavioral sciences projects. Renewed efforts to recruit MIT participation on the AIM Advisory Group were suggested.
- 2) Dr. Lindberg felt more should be done in public documentation of the SUMEX experience and in informing non-community groups about the AI programs. It was pointed out that much individual project effort already was spent in talking to professional meetings about developments and in soliciting outside users within available system capacity.
- 3) Dr. Mohler raised a question about the extent to which Health Resources Administration funding had been sought for clinically related projects. The recent experience of the MYCIN renewal being turned down by HRA cast doubt on getting much support there. Support for projects that fall between basic research and health applications is a recurrent problem which is receiving special attention at the NIH and elsewhere.
- 4) Dr. Lindberg asked if any contacts had been established with a new Information Science Resource being funded at Georgia Tech under Dr. Slonecka. Dr. Lederberg responded that he would look into that.
- 5) The need for procedures to annually review and revalidate projects using SUMEX was discussed in order to ensure optimal use of limited available resources. Material had been distributed earlier, extracted from the project reports submitted this year, as a basis for an evaluation. The Advisory Group agreed unanimously that the current projects are approved for another year. However, with respect to Dr. Lindsay's Organ Culture Project, it was noted that he had made little progress in developing a specific application project during his 2-year pilot status, and that closer consultation would be indicated. It was reported that this project had so far consumed very little resources, but the matter would also be referred to the AIM Executive Committee for action. Users should get formal notice of the status of their projects.

Executive Session (continued):

6) Time did not allow a review of the PUFF Project for which application materials had been distributed before the workshop. A review of PUFF will be followed up by mail.

OPEN SESSION:

1) A number of participants expressed the need for more extensive user consulting. It was pointed out that resources did not allow providing routine consulting support and that both program maintenance and user assistance were contributed by SUMEX staff and community members as possible within other commitments. The routes now provided for user assistance include the "GRIPE" system and links to staff members for urgent requests. Users may also address the mailbox <SUMEX> with any comments, questions or suggestions. It was suggested that an "EXPERT" command be introduced to direct questions to the appropriate person on a subsystem basis.

2) Dr. Wipke expressed a desire to arrange future workshops to include more of the project working personnel, graduate students, etc. The chief obstacle may be funding; but some regional meetings to alternate with the national workshop may be considered. In addition, more systematic use of mail and bulletin-board facilities may help keep a wider range of collaborating personnel informed of community efforts.

3) Dr. McCormick raised the issues of longer range and more comprehensive planning for AIM support, using the analogy of accelerator resources developed for particle physics. He suggested that an effort be made to establish broader based support for AIM community efforts through the Congress and perhaps to establish international cooperative ties. Dr. Lederberg pointed out that we had more work to do to establish full credibility for the AIM effort in order to pose an effective case in light of other deserving areas of scientific research also underfunded. Nevertheless, it was important to develop more coherent plans during the next five years, which would doubtless see major upheavals in computer hardware economics. The price ramp downward may be misleading, as specialized users like our community will have to make special efforts to sustain effective and compatible software even in an environment where every individual may have a "personal LISP machine" at a reasonable price. Even greater perplexities will attach to the transition period, when we may be caught with systems that are hard to time-share, yet are still too costly for individual allocation. Through this time the need to share software libraries and data sources will impose continued requirements for interconnection. The SUMEX-AIM concept, now founded on mutual sharing of hardware, may have been fortunate in having had that impulse to develop a base of community planning for the era looming ahead.

Open Session (continued):

4) A discussion followed about ways we could maintain better community contacts between workshops. The message and bulletin board facilities appear to be the best current methods available. There was agreement that more effort should be made to use these facilities for the dissemination of papers, reports, etc., rather than just for personal or administrative matters. It was noted by Dr. Lindberg that the Journal of the American Hospital Association will be produced on-line by the NLM as part of MEDLINE starting soon. An attempt will be made to develop a "proceedings" for this workshop through the BBD system.

5) A perplexing problem facing our research community is how to advance the creative use of our developments of "intelligent consultants" without encouraging regimentation of researchers and doctors by centralized points of management authority--a development that might chill initiative and freeze knowledge at its present point of development. The anticipation of such possibilities is already a factor in discouraging experts in other fields from accepting computer science applications.

Preliminary notes by Thomas Rindfleisch  
Revisions by Joshua Lederberg

Attachment