



HL7 International Affiliates Interim Report

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Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of the HL7 International Affiliates Interim Report.

The aim of this report is to try and provide an extra level of communication between affiliates during the months in between Working Group Meetings.

The report will provide information about the activities of various HL7 affiliates; this information could be in the form of breaking news (project announcements, changes in affiliate governance), project updates or even affiliate profiles. It is hoped that this will present all affiliates with an opportunity to 'show off' their achievements as well as for the smaller and less well-represented affiliates to introduce themselves and their work to the HL7 community.

As you will read in this report, there is a wealth of HL7 implementation activity (both V2 and V3) scattered around the world. A number of affiliates – particularly in the Spanish-speaking world – have been working together to share educational materials and plan projects, which is very inspiring to read about. We all have a great deal to learn from one another and global cooperation is the only way to encourage the development and widespread adoption of a global standard. Long may it continue!

Email addresses for representatives of the affiliates presented in this report are included in the Contact Details section; if you have any questions about any of the projects mentioned, then please feel free to get in touch with relevant persons – ask questions, offer advice and above all *keep talking*.

Finally, I would like to convey my sincere thanks to the affiliate representatives who took the time to share their country's HL7 experience for this report. I wish you all the greatest success with your endeavours as we move into 2007, and hope to meet some of you in person at the San Diego Working Group Meeting.

Ruth Kidd (UK),
Interim Communications Co-chair
HL7 International Affiliates Committee

Affiliate Reports

HL7 Argentina



Introduction

HL7 Argentina formed in 2000 with just five original members. Economic instability in the country meant that any expansion of the affiliate was virtually impossible until 2004, but they now have more than twenty members, consisting of an 80/20 membership split in terms of organisation/private subscriptions.

In terms of membership headcount, HL7 Argentina may be comparatively small but they are certainly very active. Diego Kaminker, recently elected chair of the affiliate, kindly shared with me some of the recent and ongoing HL7 developments with which his country has been involved.

Implementations

Currently, the largest HL7 implementation in Argentina can be found at the Hospital Italiano de Buenos Aires (HIBA), where they are using V2.x/CDA. Mr Kaminker has co-written an article on this implementation with the hospital's Vice President (Fernán Quirós) which can be found in the April 2006 edition of the HL7 Newsletter:

http://www.hl7.org/documentcenter/public/newsletters/HL7_NEWS_20060419.zip.

The Hospital Británico and the paediatric Hospital Garrahan in Buenos Aires both implement V2.x messages, the former based on SAP and the latter on Oracle.

Argentina also has a large eClaims implementation which uses V2.4 – this project involves many implementers and many thousands of message transactions.

Projects and working groups

A pharmacy working group was established and in March the group completed a pharmacy orders and claims implementation guide using V2.5. Currently there is an eClaims working group which is now working on a V2.6 eClaims implementation guide (though the recent negative balloting of V2.6 has caused some uncertainty for the group).

Shortly, the country will be establishing a CDA working group, tasked with defining a CDA implementation guide for the patient discharge domain. Mr. Kaminker has developed an open source application known as MiniCDA which can generate CDA R2 compliant instances with very little effort. The application is based upon Liora Alschuler's CDA Quick Start guide (which Diego has also translated into Spanish).

Educational activities

HL7 Argentina is extremely active in terms of education. The affiliate currently offering a two-month 'Virtual' introductory course, open to all Ibero-American countries (HL7 Uruguay and HL7 Spain are two recent participants). The course (which is written in Spanish) is being taught to a virtual class of roughly 60 people, which means that the four experienced tutors are being kept extremely busy. The course covers:

- An introduction to healthcare informatics standards, vocabularies, and the HL7 standard
- An introduction to V2 and coverage of all major topics (including ADT, orders, observations, scheduling, application management, implementation guides and z-segments)
- An introduction to V3 and coverage of topics such as the V3 RIM, data-types, vocabularies, OIDs and CDA.

Despite the fact that there is a lot of reading material, the course is weighted towards hands-on practice; by the end of their tuition participants are expected to be able to read *and* write V2 messages and CDA documents. The course is also very affordable – HL7 Argentina is keen to spread the word on HL7 as widely as possible!

Regional partnerships

HL7 Argentina has been working very hard with its neighbouring countries to establish meaningful regional communications and partnerships. Seminars in Uruguay and Chile have resulted in the formation of affiliates in both countries, and there has been some very positive movement towards affiliate formation in Colombia.

A further project (in the very early stages of development at this time) is in motion involving a collaboration for HL7 data interchange between service providers in Argentina and neighbouring Uruguay – more details on this work will hopefully be available soon.

International partnerships

As well as other South American countries, HL7 Argentina has been working closely with colleagues in HL7 Spain to share educational and organisational information.

Ideas for the future

When asked how the international HL7 community could further aid smaller/newer affiliates, HL7 Argentina had several interesting ideas.

- Multi-national HL7 benefactors and sponsors with subsidiaries in Latin America should be encouraged to become members within those countries.
- Some financial support for smaller affiliates to be able to attend working group meetings (or provision of additional means for participation) would be very much welcomed. As an example, sending one attendee to one US meeting uses up one third of HL7 Argentina's annual budget.
- International support for South American regional meetings (in the manner of the Asia-Pacific HL7 conference).
- HL7.org support in generating governmental interest and awareness about HL7, perhaps in the form of some generic government-targeted marketing from HQ which could be localised by affiliates as needed.

- V3 specs need to continue to be worked on until they become more easily readable (and therefore translatable). Mere mortals must be able to understand the standard without having to be led through it by others before adoption can really become widespread.

HL7 Turkey



Introduction

In Turkey, the HL7 affiliate operates as an autonomous subgroup of the Turkish Medical Informatics Association (TURKMIA). Affiliate members are admitted once they have passed certain prerequisite studies.

Activities

HL7 Turkey has been focusing a good deal of effort in the past year on raising the country's awareness of HL7, with the result that HL7 is (unofficially) the standard for Turkish healthcare informatics projects.

HL7 Turkey has worked closely with the Turkish Ministry of Health IT Department in order to insure that the following areas would benefit from the HL7 standard:

- National Health Information System (NHIS) components
- Hospital Information Systems
- Family Physician Information Systems

Ideas for the future

Bülent Kunaç, the affiliate representative for HL7 Turkey has noted that technical requests/questions from Turkey to HL7.org have not been receiving the kind of timely responses he would have hoped for (and sometimes no response at all). Increased support for international affiliates in terms of resolving technical issues, particularly in relation to accessing much-needed central resources, would be very helpful.

HL7 Mexico



HL7 Activity

The main user of HL7 in Mexico is the Mexican Institute for Social Security (IMSS). IMSS have been developing V3 messaging for three years and currently have 19 active messages across 9 domains with a further 24 messages currently in development. They are using a modified version of Veteran's VISTA in combination with middleware which transforms from VISTA's native V2 messages to V3 and vice versa.

There is also a joint project in progress to develop an HL7 Gateway with Microsoft. It is envisaged that this project will enable systems to exchange HL7 messages with IMSS without concerning themselves with HL7 translation.

HL7 Mexico has also been working to make government agencies such as the Ministry of Health aware of the importance of HL7 in exchanging healthcare information.

As well as improving external links, HL7 Mexico has also been working to improve its internal processes and encourage new membership across the board.

HL7 Spain



Introduction

HL7 Spain currently has approximately 60 members, of whom roughly 70% are companies with the other 30% being made up of foundation, healthcare authority and university members.

Education

Joan Guanyabens, President of HL7 Spain, reports that a good proportion of the work currently being done by HL7 Spain is centred on education –

disseminating the standard, as he puts it. During 2005/6, HL7 Spain offered frequent workshops, seminars and opportunities for V2 training and certification. In addition to internal educational events, HL7 Spain have teamed up with HL7 Argentina (as mentioned above) in order to facilitate the provision of training programmes and will be participating in the 'virtual' Spanish-language training course designed by Diego Kaminker and colleagues in Argentina (details of which can be found in the HL7 Argentina report, above). Mr. Guanyabens believes that such inter-country collaboration is extremely beneficial for all involved and is crucial in supporting affiliates which do not have the resources available to some of the larger/better funded countries.

Other activity

Apart from its educational commitments, HL7 Spain also has technical committees which are currently working on guidelines for implementing V2.5 and the CDA.

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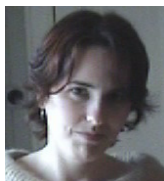
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