

HOST: Hi, and welcome to the “Did you say Mainframe?” podcast series. This is where we regularly interview IBM technical experts who can help you to understand important IBM mainframe hardware and software issues. I'm your host Nick Garrod.

Today we're going to talk about [CICS Configuration Manager, this is part two of a two part podcast]

Our guest today is Joe Winchester] from [the CICS Explorer Strategy and Planning team]. it's great to have you back again for this second piece .

SME: Hello, it's nice to be here.

HOST: Before we begin, I'd like to mention to our listeners that there is more information on the CICS Configuration Manager the IBM CICS website. I'll be giving out more information at the end of this podcast.

Host: So Joe, carrying on from the previous podcast, getting back to the CM, CM is really all about control and governance of CICS definitions, isn't it?

SME: Yes it is, apologies that the previous podcast was supposed to be all about CM and I got a little bit carried away and talked about the CICS Explorer, so I'll try to put more slant on the CM here, it's possibly because I'm so excited about the CICS Explorer. However, CM, right so I touched on the fact that the integration point of the CICS Explorer was such that the definitions in the CICS Explorer remain and look the same, once you install CM, however, contextually by selecting them, you now have access to all of the history that any user and program running under CM's control has made to that definition, a very deep history. That is really part of CM's strengths, one of its strengths which is control and governance of CICS definitions, an example that you can do as well as just say I wanted to do a change for a definition, you can also run searches across the journal, you can just come in and say “you know what, I really want to see all the changes that Bob made to the CSD last week” and then you can find all of them and then you can say “you know what? Bob really messed up, I'm just going to set things back and right mouse click, hit the restore button” and you can set everything back, you can save Bob, and hopefully if you are Bob, maybe you can do it before people notice what you did to the production system, and these are all atomic, they'll occur together, and you've really got a lot of very very powerful control over your definitions.

But there is a lot more that you can do. One of the things that CM provides is within the CICS Explorer environment when CM is installed is that you can see all of your repositories together and work with them all together. So an example, if you have perhaps 25 regions, some of them may be a part of a CICSplex, some of them may be not. Within CM you can see all of the CSD's that manage all of those regions at the same time as presented together, you can select any of them, look in any of them, and then you can also start doing compares between them (compare definitions, compare groups, compare lists) and start doing analysis and operations on those definitions.

So I went to an IBM conference earlier this year, it was in Las Vegas, where a very large US healthcare company gave a really sweet presentation of the three CICS Tools IA, PA and CM. What was really neat was that instead of myself or one of my

IBM colleagues standing at the front of the room and having to convince people that what we were talking about was actually useful to them, we actually had a customer doing it, so it was fabulous, we sat at the back, loved it. What he focused on for CM was how being able to access all of his 50 CSD's, and now see, pretty much for the first time, how they related to each other, and all of the sorts of entropy, and start doing clean up, he'd gone down to 15 CSD's and his target was 5, and that's actually really huge. So there is a very tangible and real cost saving to do with reducing clutter and consolidate everything, it makes it easier for him to go forward following new regions and we were really please by the feedback that he got from his management, and that he was sort of able to share with us within that presentation.

HOST: Well that sounds great Joe, but you mentioned that CM was revved earlier this year, I think you said v2.1, what's specifically new in this release?

SME: Right, ok that's really interesting. So one of the things that placed the CM's strengths is being able to see all of the definitions and through the CICS Explorer's SM connection, all of the installed resources live, active regions and being able to work with them all together. It's very important that we allow you to compare the definitions within repositories and between definitions and the installed versions of the resources within the live regions. The first one of which is comparing between definitions, that's something that we've done a bunch of work for and we're continuing to do more and it's an intelligent compare. If you were to just traditionally print off the contents of two CSD's and line them up side by side, you will see that there are resources that are the same but they will be flagged as being different, the dates will be different, perhaps if there's a production region and the test region where you have two different files, the VSAM data set names will be different, LSL pull ID's will be different, and there is not just attribute by attribute, but perhaps a test region has the programs and the transactions and the files in the same region. In production, they're more split apart, because there's more workload management and throughput of those regions. What we need to do when we're comparing between definitions is recognise that, and recognise the differences and let you very quickly be able to say I want to compare, but take out the noise and compare just the important things so that as the information then gets migrated between the definitions, you know if any important changes occurred, or you know if the changes are unimportant, if it's part of the application change or its simply part of how that application deployed in that particular region, is bound to that region.

As well as comparing definitions with each other the CICS Explorer with CM lets you perform comparison on entire groups. The UI is really nice and shows what changed as well as when they occurred and by whom, plus in V2.1 we introduced a very nice feature called 'cold start analysis' which lets you compare between the definitions in the CSD or CICS plex repository against what is actually active and live in the region in other words the installed version of the region. That's really important because when a system is brought down and bounced and when the region is restarted, cold started, it will be restarted from the definitions as in define in the CSD, or the CP17 repository, and the groups within the group list that's are installed. Now once the region is left running, changes will be made, some of those will be changes made to a tuning application, people using CM2, CMT or the CICS Explorer possibly, or the CP7 web user interface, or another management product, you might make changes to those, and its very important that, you know in a CICS shop, if I bring this region

down and bring it back up again, will it look the same way that it does now, and if not, why not? And also can I reconcile these differences, can I possibly start retro applying the changes to the definitions based upon the changes that have occurred to the live system, possibly by some automation tool. So being able to compare and have this single point of control over all of the installed resources and all of the definitions and compare sideways and across various different lines, that's really key, and that was a big key point of CM 2.1.

HOST: Ok so I can see that v2.2 has some very important useful functionality, but there must be a further road map, there must be other things that you want to do in the future, could you tell us without giving away too many secrets. A little bit about that please?

SME: Yes thanks, I'll try without giving too many secrets, so anything I say might change in the future etc and so forth. But leaving that aside, seriously, there's two areas which involve a product, one of which is CM, it has features that are available within the CM's server and it's ISPF interface that we just haven't simply surfaced in the CICS Explorer yet, so there is a lot of diamonds and gems in there that we can just tap into, the biggest one is possibly about migration between environments, I've talked about being able to compare definitions between environments. What configuration manager lets you do, lets assume that you have got test regions, test systems, possibly a staging environment, development environments, production environments, environments within different regions, different local's, possibly some offshore development done, data centres, CICS definitions will flow between those as application developers request new definitions to work with, to install them to begin production, they create new test regions. What CM lets you do, is it lets you actually define those as first class things, we call them migration schemes between the environments, and you can find rules by which information is allowed to move, and also transformations that occur.

So I talked earlier about things like the topology of those might be different, or the bindings, the actual data sets, library names and so forth so different. That can all be burned into the CM product so that as you say "I wish to migrate definitions between test to production, between production and offshore development" possibly or some development environments, that information is automatically transformed based upon a set of rules, and as people own those particular environments they can view those changes, they can accept them, they can reject them, there is lots of governance that goes on about that. Going forward as well with CM, I suppose what we wanted to do with the product is, we just wanted to try and position it as the tool that you use to manage complex environments, large scale environments, and just listen to users, and we wanted to spend as much time as we can talking to customers, visiting conferences, we have a forum out there on the web and collect as much requirements as we can so that we can evolve the product with the CICS Tools that we have within the CICS Explorer, we refresh them about four times a year, and we really do listen to the requests that people ask for, and we try to understand their pain points, and based upon that, that's how we decide what goes into the future releases of the product

HOST: [Joe], thanks for taking the time to talk to us about the CICS Configuration Manager and the CICS Explorer.

SME: You're welcome.

HOST: Well, that wraps up this second part of our Configuration manager podcast discussion. To find out more about the CICS Configuration Manager and its related products, please go to the description for this podcast at:

<http://www.ibm.com/software/os/systemz/podcasts/websphereonz/>

Further information can also be found on the IBM CICS Tools website at:

<http://www.ibm.com/software/http/cics/cm/>

Join us next time as we talk about another important mainframe topic. For now, this is Nick Garrod saying "Thanks for listening".

Speaker information:

Title: CICS TS V4.1 Event Processing Support

Summary: Hear about how you can emit business events from CICS applications without having to change the programs.

Speaker Name: Joe Winchester

Speaker Bio:

Joe Winchester is a software developer for IBM working on the CICS Explorer, the "New Face of CICS". Prior to working on the CICS Explorer Joe worked in GUI software development, and remains the team lead of the Eclipse Visual Editor project and also the editor-in-chief of the Java Developer's Journal. One of his goals with the CICS Explorer is to make the operation and use of CICS and CICS tools as intuitive and usable as any other piece of desktop software, so CICS can be expanded into new application domains and usability scenarios

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Redbook on CICS Explorer:

<http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/abstracts/sg247778.html?Open>