MSC Forecaster Workstation

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The evolution of Forecaster Workstations within the Meteorological Service of Canada has had a spotted history. An attempt was made in the mid to late 80s to build an integrated workstation, where information was geo-referenced, but this never went into operation use. Local development produced software, which effectively displayed images and this has been in use for the last 10 years. It is fast but restricted in its functionality and expandability.

Since 1995, fiscal pressures have limited the evolution of workstation software and placed great emphasis on building tools to increase the efficiency of forecast operations, using automation and the 'do once and use many' principle. To address the changing operational needs, a workstation project was initiated in 2002.

Reviews of both in-house and external options lead to the conclusion that that most effective solution for the MSC was to join the NinJo consortium, which has been developing a forecaster's workstation. This development (described in a separate paper presented at this workshop) is a co-operation between the Deutsche Wetterdienst, MétéoSwiss, and the Danish Meteorological Institute. The NinJo system has a new, well-designed architecture and represented the direction the MSC would have gone, had it been doing the development in-house.

In May 2003, discussions with the NinJo consortium resulted in the MSC joining the development with specific responsibility to contribute the radar and the interactive graphics applications. An in-house team that included a NinJo experienced consultant was formed. The first contribution to the development came with the inclusion of radar data visualization in the November 2003 release, Version 0.7.

Work is progressing on delivering the two applications for use by all partners and to implement NinJo operationally in the MSC offices. Substantial work is required to organize, harmonize and rationalize the internal MSC data. This needed to be done regardless. Telecommunications advances are permitting this distributed development to take place. Face-to-face interaction is important and this is one of the costs of this kind of arrangement.

Feedback from MSC evaluators is being merged with the reactions of the consortium partners. There is very high agreement of all the users on how the software needs to function.

With the release of the first operational version, NinJo 1.0, scheduled for late in 2004 detailed planning for the implementation of the software and the training. The MSC is working towards start of operational implementation in the spring 2005. The MSC is looking forward to extending the workstation functionality, through international cooperation, in versions beyond this first release.