

Announcement of Proposed 1987 Smalltalk Language Specification

by (alphabetical order, partial listing):

George Bosworth, Digitalk
Steve Burbeck, Softsmarts
L. Peter Deutsch, ParcPlace Systems
Barry Haynes, Apple Computer
Ralph Johnson, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
J. Eliot B. Moss, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Dave Thomas, Carleton University
David Ungar, Stanford University
Steve Vegdahl, Tektronix
Allen Wirfs-Brock, Tektronix

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The attached document is a proposed specification for the Smalltalk language. It is the outgrowth of a series of meetings held at Stanford University on December 11 and 12, 1986 and February 26 and 27, 1987. The need for such a specification is a direct result of Smalltalk's success. The language, environment, and concepts that were given birth at Xerox PARC over a decade ago have grown beyond their initial research setting into various implementations and systems commercially available from numerous vendors.

Our immediate goal in formulating the attached document is to provide a basis for greater portability of applications among Smalltalk implementations by means of a clear and precise language specification. At present, the Smalltalk language is under specified leading to divergence among implementations, thus needlessly complicating portability.

We recognize that we represent but a fraction of the total Smalltalk community and have therefore purposely limited ourselves to the following goals:

1. Clarify, cleanup, and unify the details of the existing Smalltalk language definitions;
2. Minimize the disruptions to existing users with large bodies of working Smalltalk code;
3. Add a few mature and valuable enhancements.

We believe we have modestly met the above goals. We intend that our future implementations will follow this proposal and we encourage others to do the same. We, therefore, earnestly solicit comments on the attached proposal. Comments should be forwarded to:

L. Peter Deutsch
ParcPlace Systems
P. O. box 60264
Palo Alto, CA 94306

Further, we feel that the attached proposal represents but a necessary first step in achieving an eventual Smalltalk standard. Clearly much more remains to be done, but by formulating a limited but concrete proposal at this time, we hope to lay the groundwork upon which further efforts can be based. More importantly the process of preparing this proposal has already fostered the sense of good will and willingness to proceed among the major Smalltalk system vendors that is crucial for the eventual success of a future standard.

We wish to see the process continued, especially since we see that Smalltalk systems are gaining wide commercial acceptance. We intend to continue to work together among ourselves, with users, and the wider community to evolve the Smalltalk language and Smalltalk systems. In this connection, we note that IEEE has approved and is in the process of organizing an official Smalltalk Standard effort. We hope that all interested parties will participate in this effort: details will be announced in the near future. The present draft language standard is not meant to preempt the IEEE activity, but rather to serve as an input to it, and as a possible interim partial standard while the more careful IEEE process is underway.