The (Slightly Revised) SBML Development Process

Michael Hucka and the rest of the SBML Team and the SBML Editors

SBML Forum Meeting
5 October 2007
Long Beach, California, USA
Goals of the SBML Development Process

- A written, explicitly-defined, transparent process for evolving and refining SBML in a way that promotes the development of high-quality standards based on community consensus among all stakeholders.

- Features valued in the process definition:
  - Transparent, well-defined procedures for extensions and changes to SBML.
  - Mechanisms and steps for handling errors in SBML specifications.
  - Self-sufficient community—indeedependent of any organization or individual.

- The process is focused on development and publication of specifications and guidelines for SBML and its use, with an eventual goal of seeking ratification of some SBML specifications by a standards-making body.
About SBML specification Levels, Versions, & Releases

- **Levels**: stratification of complexity and functionality
  - Enables everyone to gain experience with large feature set changes in a progressive fashion
    - Contrast: suppose we tried to define L2v3 right from the start
  - Eventually, interest in a given Level diminishes and work begins in earnest on the next higher level

- **Versions**: adjustments within levels to features
  - Version may change syntax but in a limited way
  - Motivation: hard to predict all wanted features, or their interactions

- **Releases**: corrections to errors within a Version specification
  - E.g., corrections to typos or contradictions in the specification
  - Releases do no change syntax within a Version of a Level
Proposed community organization
Proposed community organization

- The SBML Community:
  - SBML Forum
  - SBML Architectural Board
  - SBML Editors
- The SBML Team
Proposed community organization

• The SBML Community:
  ☐ SBML Forum
  ☐ SBML Architectural Board
  ☐ SBML Editors

• The SBML Team

• New: Chair of the SBML Editors/Editorial Committee
SBML Forum

• Community of people sufficiently interested in SBML that they take the trouble to observe and (hopefully) participate in discussions

• Only 1 requirement for being a member of the SBML Forum:
  - Must subscribe to sbml-discuss@sbml.org
  - (Can do more of course—attend meetings, be on sbml-discuss, be members of Architectural Board and/or be an Editor, etc.)
SBML Forum

- Community of people sufficiently interested in SBML that they take the trouble to observe and (hopefully) participate in discussions

- Only 1 requirement for being a member of the SBML Forum:
  - Must subscribe to **sbml-discuss@sbml.org**
  - (Can do more of course—attend meetings, be on sbml-discuss, be members of Architectural Board and/or be an Editor, etc.)
SBML Architectural Board

- Members of the SBML Forum who are interested in directly helping to influence the form and development of the SBML language

- Principal role: create & evaluate formal proposals for changes to SBML
  - Assess requests from the SBML Forum
  - formulate proposals for features & extensions
    - (We still need to define the structure of a formal proposal)
  - Evaluate errata reports & proposals for revisions
  - Vote on which proposed SBML changes to make
    - Voting is electronic and archived
SBML Architectural Board

- Members of the SBML Forum who are interested in directly helping to influence the form and development of the SBML language

- Principal role: create & evaluate formal proposals for changes to SBML
  - Assess requests from the SBML Forum
  - Formulate proposals for features & extensions
    - (We still need to define the structure of a formal proposal)
  - Evaluate errata reports & proposals for revisions
  - Vote on which proposed SBML changes to make
    - Voting is electronic and archived

This is not yet in place
Architectural Board membership

- Membership is free, but:
  - Membership carries responsibilities which may entail financial obligations
  - Members must actively participate in the SBML development process
- Members will be publicly listed on sbml.org
- Members can nominate themselves or be nominated
  - Some explanation must be provided about experience
- Nominations can come at any time
- Twice a year, a public electronic vote will be announced on sbml-discuss and held regarding all nominees since the last vote was held
  - Voting will be held open for 3 weeks
  - To be elected, nominee must receive at least X% of votes cast, subject to limits on number of people from same group
    - X difficult to determine right now
Number of A. B. members

- No total number limit on size of A. B.
- Limits on composition from any one group:
  - Not more than 10% of the A. B. membership can be from a single group
    - Number is rounded up to whole integers
  - Exception: SBML Editors and the Chair of the SBML Editorial Committee (who are always considered part of the A. B.) do not count in this assessment
“Good standing” rules for A. B. members

• Must vote on issues that come to a vote
  ○ Chair of the SBML Editorial Committee will keep track of voting histories
  ○ A member who does not vote for 2 consecutive votes will be placed on probation, such that they must vote on the next occasion or be removed

• Must make effort to attend SBML Forum and SBML Hackathon meetings
  ○ Missing two meetings in a row is again grounds for being put on probation
  ○ This is the source of the financial obligation for A. B. members

• Probation rules
  ○ If member performs duties on next occasion, they are taken off probation
  ○ Members can petition A. B. for excuse due to extenuating circumstances
  ○ If a member is dropped, they can request to be returned after 1 year
SBML Editors

• Elected for 3 years
• Can serve more than one term, but not consecutive terms
  ☐ If an editor can’t serve a full term, a special election will be held
• 5 total editors
  ☐ The Chair is not elected and not counted as one of the SBML Editors
• At SBML Forum meetings, candidates may introduce themselves
  ☐ Voting will be held electronically and anonymously
  ☐ The Chair of the SBML Editors will tally and report vote
• Q: should voting be open to all SBML Forum or only SBML A. B.?
Two more editors are needed for 2008

- Andrew Finney & Michael Hucka’s terms technically end in 2007

- But have small problem with Hucka
  - PI on SBML grants and head of SBML Team (thus needs to be involved)

- Proposal: elect 2 new editors as planned, but make the SBML Team leader be a 6th member of the SBML Editors, as “Chair of the SBML Editors”
  - In voting involving editors only, Chair’s vote carries less “weight” than the others (thus, no tie possible)
  - Conversely, if ties arise in votes by A. B., Chair acts as tie breaker
Next steps

• Sign-up sheet for SBML Architectural Board membership (October)
• Call for nominations for SBML Editors (November)
• Voting on 2 new SBML Editors (December)
• New Editors take on roles beginning in January