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Computer Systems Division Software System Metrics Approach

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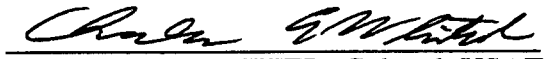
FOR THE COMMANDER



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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)

Over the decades, the increasing use of software has enabled construction and deployment of ever more capable space systems for SMC. However, managing, controlling, and participating in software development for such software-intensive systems is a difficult and error-prone task that is exacerbated by the lack of meaningful data on key products and processes. Such data should provide visibility into the health and status of the evolving software system, assist in early identification of current and potential problem areas, and aid in predicting such software system characteristics as reliability, maintainability, cost, and schedule. Until recently, comprehensive data collection and analysis methods which treat software as an integral part of a larger system have not been available. This report introduces a software system metrics approach that has been developed for this purpose. The report discusses the utility of the approach, key concepts for applying metrics to software-intensive systems, and basic metrics planning guidelines. It also introduces a set of recommended metrics that cover both the system and the software throughout the life cycle. A complete description of the metrics approach, associated contractual guidelines, and detailed descriptions of several of the recommended metrics are the subject of a forthcoming TOR.

14. SUBJECT TERMS

Acquisition	Software	Software Metrics	System Life Cycle
Contract	Software Engineering	Software Process	System Metrics
Metrics	Software Life Cycle	Systems Engineering	Systems Engineering Process

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Contents

Tables

1. Introduction

For today's large, software-intensive systems, the length of the development cycle and the number and complexity of technical and organizational interfaces create a great deal of uncertainty and risk. Additionally, for many of these systems, the government's acquisition philosophy dictates that minimal standards and contractor controls be included in the contract, which results in the government having little insight into the quality of the developing software-intensive product. It is, therefore, necessary to be able to objectively evaluate these systems during their development to determine whether or not they will meet requirements, schedule, and budget; to assist risk management; and to facilitate corrective and preventive action. Software system metrics can provide objective information necessary for technical and managerial insight into, control of, and improvement of the development effort.

Over the last few years, Computer Systems Division personnel have developed a metrics approach that has been designed for use during the development of large software-intensive systems. This approach includes an integrated set of system- and software-level metrics recommended for collection by the development contractor(s) and detailed descriptions of each of these metrics. In creating this set of recommended metrics and their descriptions, the results of other current metrics technology efforts were incorporated, as appropriate. The metrics approach also includes suggested tailorings to selected contractual documentation to ensure that needed metrics information will be collected and reported to the Government. The metrics approach, recommended contractual documentation guidelines, and detailed descriptions of several of the recommended metrics are the subject of an unpublished TOR, "Metrics Guidelines for Software Intensive MCCR Systems."

2. Metrics Within Large Systems: Three Key Concepts

Three basic concepts recommended for the development of large software-intensive systems include *seamlessness*, *consistency*, and *defined expectations*. These concepts apply to many aspects of development, such as supportability and reliability, as well as to metrics. The *seamless* concept recognizes that most of our software systems will be developed by a prime and several subcontractors. This means that all software system products should be consistent among all contractors so that the exact identity of the developer (i.e., prime or subcontractors) is transparent to the Government. For similar software, uniform methods and types of tools and uniform training in these methods and tools are recommended. Thus, in accordance with the concept of seamlessness, all contractors should collect and report the same metrics information so that a uniform set of metrics information is reported to the program office.

The *consistency* concept recognizes that the total software process is an integral part of the overall systems engineering process and must be dealt with as such throughout the entire life cycle and across all systems engineering disciplines. The systems engineering process has a system-level component to the process, which then flows down to hardware- and software-level subprocesses. Consistency among these levels is necessary. For a large system, metrics should be collected at several levels: system, segment, and lower levels. Within the lower levels, there are hardware- and software-specific components. The software-level metrics program has been created to be consistent with and provide information to the higher level measurements. The higher level process will detail the methods by which lower level measures are incorporated into higher level measures. Software-level metrics are defined to be those that deal with software-only components; integrated hardware/software components are handled by higher level measurements.

The metrics approach includes effective, early communication of Government technical *expectations* to the contractor(s) before Engineering and Manufacturing Development (EMD) so that the contractor(s) can create appropriate plans to meet these expectations. It is recommended that this be done by: delivering Government expectations documents to the Dem/Val contractors before they begin developing their EMD planning documentation; participating in Government-contractor Integrated Product Teams; and providing feedback on early versions of developing planning documentation. One purpose of the TOR referenced in Section 1 is to provide such metrics expectations to the contractor.

3. Metrics Planning: Basic Guidelines

3.1 Primitive and Aggregate Measures

The purpose of the metrics program is twofold: to gain visibility into the overall health and status of the evolving software system and to identify at the earliest possible point in the life cycle, specific problem areas or potential future problems. Both detailed and aggregate measures are necessary and need to be reported to the Government on a regular basis (often monthly). To assess overall health and status, cumulative measures should generally be used, whereas for the identification and resolution of problems, metrics should be reported at a detailed level. Detailed or primitive information should be reported (or made available) in electronic form for analysis and retention by the program office.

3.2. Metrics Descriptions

Emphasis is placed on the need for careful definition and description of each metric and its report formats. Without specific definitions of precisely what is being measured, the measurement will have little meaning or use. It is, for example, insufficient to report source lines of code (SLOC), without discussing how that code is being counted. A definition that excludes data declarations and comments and counts only executable SLOC may easily result in a metric value that is half that resulting from a definition that includes data declarations and comments. Additionally, without relatively consistent descriptions of a given metric that is used on several different programs, it will not be possible to adequately evaluate the usefulness of reported metric data.

3.3 Metrics Collection/Reporting Tools

It is expected that whenever possible, the collection of metrics data will be automated and will use tools that have been integrated into the contractor's software engineering environment. In general, it is preferable to use commercial tools when they are available. However, for some metrics it may be necessary to use contractor-developed tools, either because there are no commercial tools that calculate the defined metric or because the contractor tool already supports some aspect of the existing development process and that aspect is being measured. For example, if the contractor has an existing automated problem report tracking tool, then accumulating metrics on problem reports may be done most efficiently by modifying the existing tool to collect the defined metric. The same metrics tools should be used by all development contractors, and to the extent possible, all tools and methods should be compatible and integrated among all levels of the software system.

3.4 Contractor Metrics Plans

The contractor's process planning documentation (systems and software level) should include a detailed and unambiguous definition of each metric and its report formats, or should reference Government-provided definitions and report formats that the contractor intends to use. The plans should also include descriptions of methods/tools used to collect, analyze, and report metric information, as well as a description of management's use of the collected metric information to assess and improve the software system product and the processes used to generate the product.

3.5 Metrics for Many Disciplines

For software, the metrics program is designed to share information with many software disciplines (e.g., risk management, Software Quality Assurance, testing, management, and problem reporting). The contractor's software planning document should discuss the various software organizations/activities that use metric data. The use of metric information to assess software risk, to assess and improve software processes, to manage the technical effort, and to identify error-prone software units should, for example, be explained.

4. Recommended Metrics

The activities of selecting and defining a set of metrics that effectively covers the software process can only reach closure in the context of the specific development processes to be used. However, it is possible to list a general set of software metrics which covers the main activities and phases of the software life cycle. This set can be tailored and specific metric definitions can be developed to suit a specific software life cycle and process.

Table 1 shows an example set of metrics that covers the software life cycle. Three categories of metrics have been identified: progress, resource, and product/process. A collection of metrics from each of these categories is usually required for comprehensive coverage. Progress metrics indicate an organization's adherence to schedule. Resource metrics indicate the amount of development, integration, test, and/or support resources and personnel available and the amount in use. Product/process metrics are used to measure attributes of the documentation (electronic and/or paper) and code and characteristics of the activities, methods, practices, and transformations employed in developing the products. Product and process measurement activities tend to overlap, which is why they are combined into one category. For example, a high number of product defects can imply the existence of a problem in the process used to create the product. Also, a dearth of exposed defects can indicate the existence of a superior product or a deficient inspection process.

While it is necessary to have a software metric set that spans the software life cycle and is tailored to the process, this is not sufficient for a software effort that will be integrated into a larger system. Thus, we also recommend use of a set of progress and product/process metrics at the system level that is integrated and consistent with the software-level metric set, and these metrics are listed in Table 2. Summary descriptions of each type of metric listed in Tables 1 and 2 appear in Tables 3 through 5.

Table 1. Recommended Metrics for the Software Measurement Program

PROGRESS

Requirements Progress
- Specification Completeness*

Development Progress
- Design Document Completeness
- Design Completeness (CSCs, CSUs)
- Code Completeness (CSCs, CSUs)

Test Progress
- Test Document Completeness
- CSU Unit Test Completeness
- CSC Integration Test Completeness
- CSCI Integration Test Completeness
- Incremental Build (Software Integration) Test Completeness

RESOURCE

Staffing
- Actual versus Planned Level/Turnover Rate
- Major Software Function
- CSCI
- Skill Level

Resource Utilization (Development, Integration, and Test Resources)
- CPU
- RAM
- DISK
- I/O Channel
- Workstation

PRODUCT AND PROCESS

Size (for CSCI, CSC, and CSU)
- Requirements
- Design
- Code (for Each Language)*
  - HOLs, Assembly Languages, and Others (Special Purpose)
  - Operating System Command Language
  - Data Base Structure Definition Language
  - User Interface Construction Language
  - Expert System Rules

PRODUCT AND PROCESS (continued)

Complexity
- Structure*
- Information Flow*
- Data Structures

Target Resource Utilization
- CPU
- RAM
- DISK
- I/O Channel

Volatility
- Requirements*
- Design and Code
- Build Definition

Traceability
- Between Requirements*
- Between Requirements and Design
- Between Requirements and Test

Defect Density
- Requirements*
- Design and Code*

Fault Density
- Requirements
- Design and Code*

Test Coverage
- Requirements
- Design and Code

Problem Reports/Action Items/Issues
- Opened/Closed
- Reason for Closure
- Type of Error
- Severity
- Criticality
- Source
- Age

*Definition complete or in progress.

Table 2. Recommended Metrics for the System Measurement Program

PROGRESS	PRODUCT AND PROCESS
Requirements Progress • Specification Completeness* - System/Segment - Integrated (Hardware and Software) Configuration Item (CI) - Hardware Configuration Item (HWCI) Design Progress • System/Segment Design Document Completeness • Design Completeness - System/Segment - Integrated CI - HWCI Integration and Test Progress • Test Documentation Completeness • Test Completeness - System/Segment - Integrated CI - HWCI	Volatility • Requirements* - System/Segment - Integrated CI - HWCI • Design - System/Segment - Integrated CI - HWCI Traceability • Between Requirements* - System to Segment - Segment to CI - CI to CI (Higher Level to Lower Level) • Between Requirements and Design - System/Segment - Integrated CI - HWCI • Between Requirements and Test - System/Segment - Integrated CI - HWCI Problem Reports/Action Items/Issues • Opened/Closed • Reason for Closure • Type of Error • Severity • Criticality • Source • Age

*Definition complete or in progress

Table 3. Product/Process Metrics

Metric	Summary Description: Overview and Purpose
Volatility	Indicate changes in products/processes and reasons for change. Provide insight into system maturity and stability. Aid in predicting future changes to products/processes which are affected by current changes in products/processes. Essential in interpreting other metrics, e.g., progress, traceability, and completeness metrics. Recommended for requirements, design and code, and incremental build definitions.
Traceability	Indicate degree to which development organization maintains accountability for meeting requirements at each life-cycle stage via a comprehensive requirements allocation and mapping process. Measure relationships between: (1) requirements and requirements at other specification levels, designs, code/databases, builds, and tests; and (2) designs and code/databases, builds, and tests. Provide quantitative means for determining whether all required relationships/dependencies are addressed. Assist in exposing incompletely specified, insufficiently analyzed, overly specified, and complex areas of system. Essential in interpreting other metrics, e.g. completeness metrics.
Target Resource Utilization	Indicate planned and actual utilization of computer resources for target system. Provide timely feedback on whether software is being designed and developed to fit resources planned for its operational use. Assist in preventing adverse effects on cost, schedule, and quality due to inadequate system sizing. Recommended for CPU, primary memory, mass storage, I/O capacity, and other applicable resources.
Problem Report and Action Item	Indicate quality of products and process used to create them, and effectiveness of engineering process in documenting and addressing problems and issues. Consist of counts of problem reports and action items characterized by source, product, problem type/category, age, severity, criticality, status, and primary reason for closure. Recommended for all products generated from requirements through testing and maintenance activities. Essential in interpreting other metrics.
Size	Indicate magnitude of development and maintenance effort. Used in assessing progress, estimating remaining cost and schedule, identifying technical problems, predicting maintenance cost and effort, generating historical data for future use, and quantifying the amount of reuse. Recommended for requirements, designs, and code. For code, size must include *all* code that the programmer writes in *any* language: compiled/assembled languages, operating system command languages, database definition languages, graphical user interface builders, and expert system shells. (SLOC is the recommended measurement for several of these languages.) Classified by: physical and logical statements, statement type, deliverable and non-deliverable statements, operational and support statements; and new, modified, and reused statements.
Complexity	Indicate structural characteristics of software system logic flow, information flow, and databases. Useful in determining whether work has been completed satisfactorily, in planning for code development and test, in identifying technical problems, and in estimating development, test, and maintenance cost and effort. Several studies have shown that highly complex software is more likely to contain errors and is more difficult to maintain than less complex software.
Defect Density	Indicate density[1] of product defects that are detected *during an inspection or walkthrough.* Classified by type, criticality, and source. Provide early insight into quality, assist in cost/schedule estimation, and indicate effectiveness of inspection/walkthrough process. Recommended for requirements, designs, and code. Useful in predicting product/process volatility. Essential in interpreting other metrics, e.g., completeness, traceability, and volatility metrics.
Fault Density	Indicate density[1] of product faults that are detected *during test execution or post-test analysis.* Classified by type, criticality, and source. Indicate effectiveness of testing process. Assist in determining effectiveness of other software processes and quality of their products. Recommended for requirements, designs, and code. Useful in predicting product/process volatility. Essential in interpreting other metrics, e.g., completeness, traceability, test coverage, and volatility metrics.
Test Coverage	Indicate the extent and adequacy of testing. Assist in determining test completeness and test progress. Two general types of test coverage metrics are Requirements Test Coverage metrics and Design/Code Test Coverage metrics. Requirements Test Coverage metrics indicate (a) whether or not test documentation is adequate for requirements verification and (b) whether or not tests fully verify requirements. Design/Code Test Coverage metrics include counts of how many of the total number of statements, paths, branches, and interfaces are tested and also upon how varied/realistic are the input data sets used in testing. Together, these two types of test coverage metrics provide data on product quality and compliance with requirements.

[1]Density is the number of defects/faults found divided by the size of the product in which the defect/fault is detected.

Table 4. Project Resource Metrics

Metric	Summary Description: Overview and Purpose
Staffing	Characterize number, discipline (e.g., design, coding, test, configuration management, quality assurance), skill level (discipline and years of education and experience), and area(s) of assignment (e.g., CSCIs) for development organization personnel. Indicate planned and unplanned changes in staffing level and assignments, which can be used to predict whether an effort is adequately staffed to preclude adverse effects on cost, schedule, and quality.
Development, Integration, and Test Resource Utilization	Indicate planned and actual utilization of computer resources for software development and support activities. Provide timely feedback on whether planned and available resources for each phase will adequately support the activities of that phase. Assist in preventing adverse effects on cost, schedule, and productivity due to resource shortages. Recommended for CPU, primary memory, mass storage, I/O capacity, workstations, and other applicable resources such as COTS software.

Table 5. Progress Metrics

Metric	Summary Description: Overview and Purpose
Completeness	Indicate work accomplished versus work remaining in requirements and design specification, coding, inspection, unit test, integration and test, and system test. Assist in estimating cost and schedule remaining, in identifying technical problem areas, and in determining readiness to proceed to the next phase. Each class of completeness indicator (where a class focuses on a single product, e.g., requirements, design, code, or test) should be used in conjunction with the other measures for that class as indicated in the "Integrated Progress" metric description below.
Integrated Progress	Indicate overall progress in requirements, design, code, and test. Encompass measures of completeness, volatility, traceability, defect and fault density, problem reports/action items, and test coverage as appropriate for phase and product under consideration. (The high information content of Integrated Progress metrics lends insight into progress that measures of completeness alone cannot supply.)