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Integration and Interoperability Models for Systems of Systems

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Outline

Background of “the interoperability problem”

Origins in integration research

Current models of interoperability

Proposed characteristics of a unified model

Conclusion



Current State of Software Engineering

New systems usually a heterogeneous collection of custom and commercial products

- Integration provided by some third-party technology

New systems seldom expected to function independently

- Expected to cooperate with existing systems (e.g., as a part of a system of systems)
- Ability to achieve “cooperation” is generally termed “interoperability”

Elements of these cooperating systems undergo frequent changes (e.g., upgrades of commercial products)

Thus: boundaries within and between systems begin to blur

- Distinctions between a “system of systems” and a single, complex, distributed system disappear



Current State - 2

Interoperability can occur only when some degree of compatibility exists among all elements that must cooperate in some purpose

Interoperability is based on the existence of (and cannot occur lacking) a single, common conceptual view

- **Conceptual view can be embodied in an architecture or design**
- **Conceptual view can be implemented through a common protocol**
- **Single conceptual view determines whether a system (or system-of-systems) can be made to cooperate as intended**



The Problem Space

Incomplete understanding of scope and nature of the engineering to be accomplished

- **Cannot discern incompatible solutions or intractable problems**

Ongoing inertia toward separate programs, managed and executed independently

- **Cannot, in such a climate, ensure that independent programs act in service of a common goal (i.e., the interoperable end goal)**

Few technologies currently exist that permit quantification of any aspect of interoperability

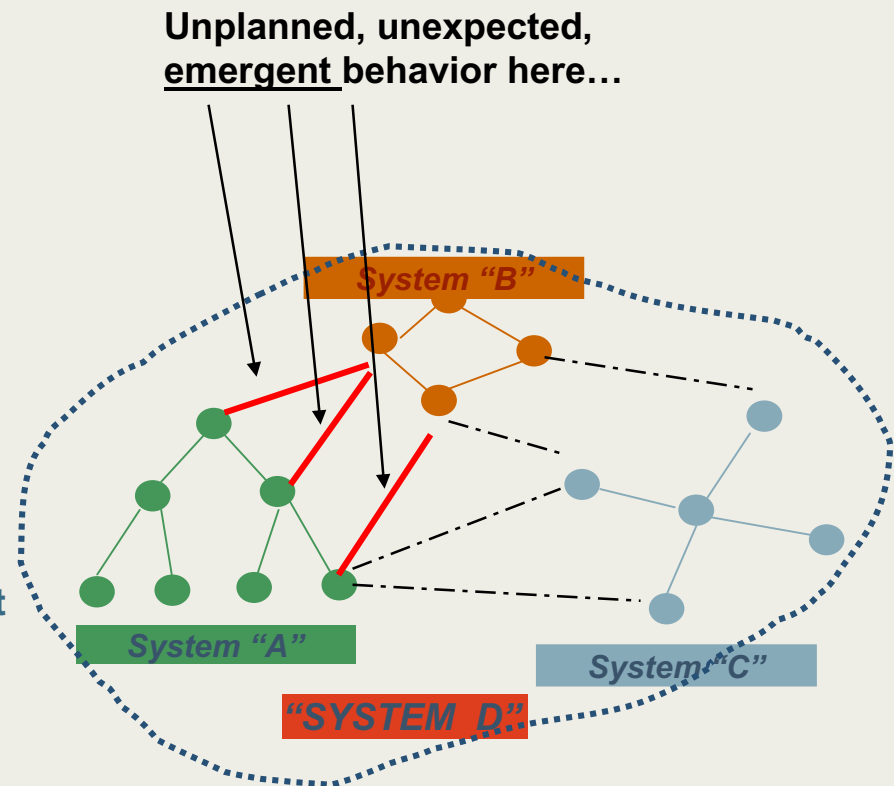


An Instance of the Problem

We know quite a lot about constructing systems from components (over which we may have little or no control).

We know something about composing *systems of systems* from individual systems from individual systems (over which we may have little or no control).

We know very little about constructing an *interoperable network of systems*...the key distinction being that the network is unbounded (or very loosely bounded) and has no single controlling authority.





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Integrated CASE Environments

Extensive research between c. 1987 and 1993 to create integrated collections of CASE tools

- **Also called Project Support Environments, Software Engineering Environments, ...**
- **Extensive technologies developed to provide third-party integrating capability**
- **PCTE (ECMA) and CAIS-A (U.S. DoD) were major integrating technologies**

Considerable advance of knowledge about integration, but few tangible instances of usable environments

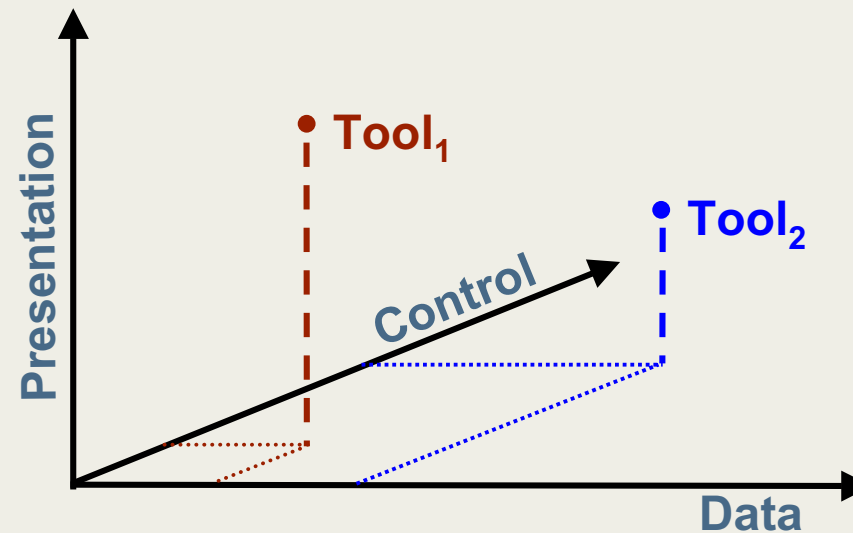
- **Three integration research efforts were noteworthy**



Wassermann

Distinguished three (later five) dimensions of integration

Permits multiple, independent descriptions of different facets of integration





Thomas & Nejme

Defined integration as “the property of a relationship”

Distinguished between “well integrated” and “easily integrable”

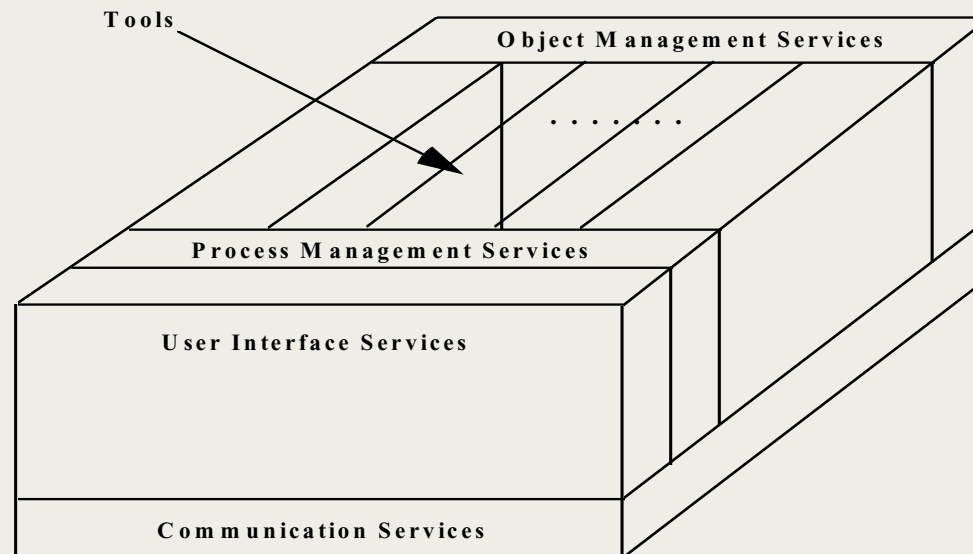
Provides a means to characterize different aspects of integration based on different human perspectives.



ECMA/NIST model

Defined capabilities in terms of “services” rather than implementations or products

Separated notion of “framework” from tools and applications that depend on that framework





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NATO C3 SAF Model

NATO C3 System Architecture Framework (NC3SAF)

- Mandated for NC3 systems architectures.
- Includes three main types of guidance for architecture development
 - Guidelines that include guiding principles for building architectures
 - Process to build and integrate architectures
 - Templates with detailed descriptions.

Based on the DoD C4ISR Architectural Framework

- Different from its U.S. counterpart in that it is inclusive of specific NATO directives, precepts and tenets.

Includes an extensive discussion of interoperability



NATO - 2

Levels of interoperability:

- **No Data Exchange**
 - No physical connection exists
- **Unstructured Data Exchange**
 - Exchange of human-interpretable, unstructured data (free text)
- **Structured Data Exchange**
 - Exchange of human-interpretable structured data intended for manual and/or automated handling, but requires manual compilation, receipt, and/or message dispatch
- **Seamless Sharing of Data**
 - Automated data sharing within systems based on a common exchange model
- **Seamless Sharing of Information**
 - Universal interpretation of information through cooperative data processing



NATO - 3

Sub-degree descriptions:

Unstructured Data Exchange

1.A Network Connectivity Network connectivity can range from a simple transport line for file transfer or basic email connecting to non-NATO systems, to full connectivity with services required by the higher sub-degrees....

1.A.1 Internetworking All LAN, MAN, WAN Connections.

1.A.2 Secure Internetworking Secure LAN, WAN, WAN Connections.

1.A.3 Packet Switch WAN Connecting to NIDTS/PTT Packet Network.

1.A.4 Circuit Switched WAN Connecting to NCN, National, Commercial Switched Network.

1.A.5 Remote Terminal Interactive computer session from remote location.

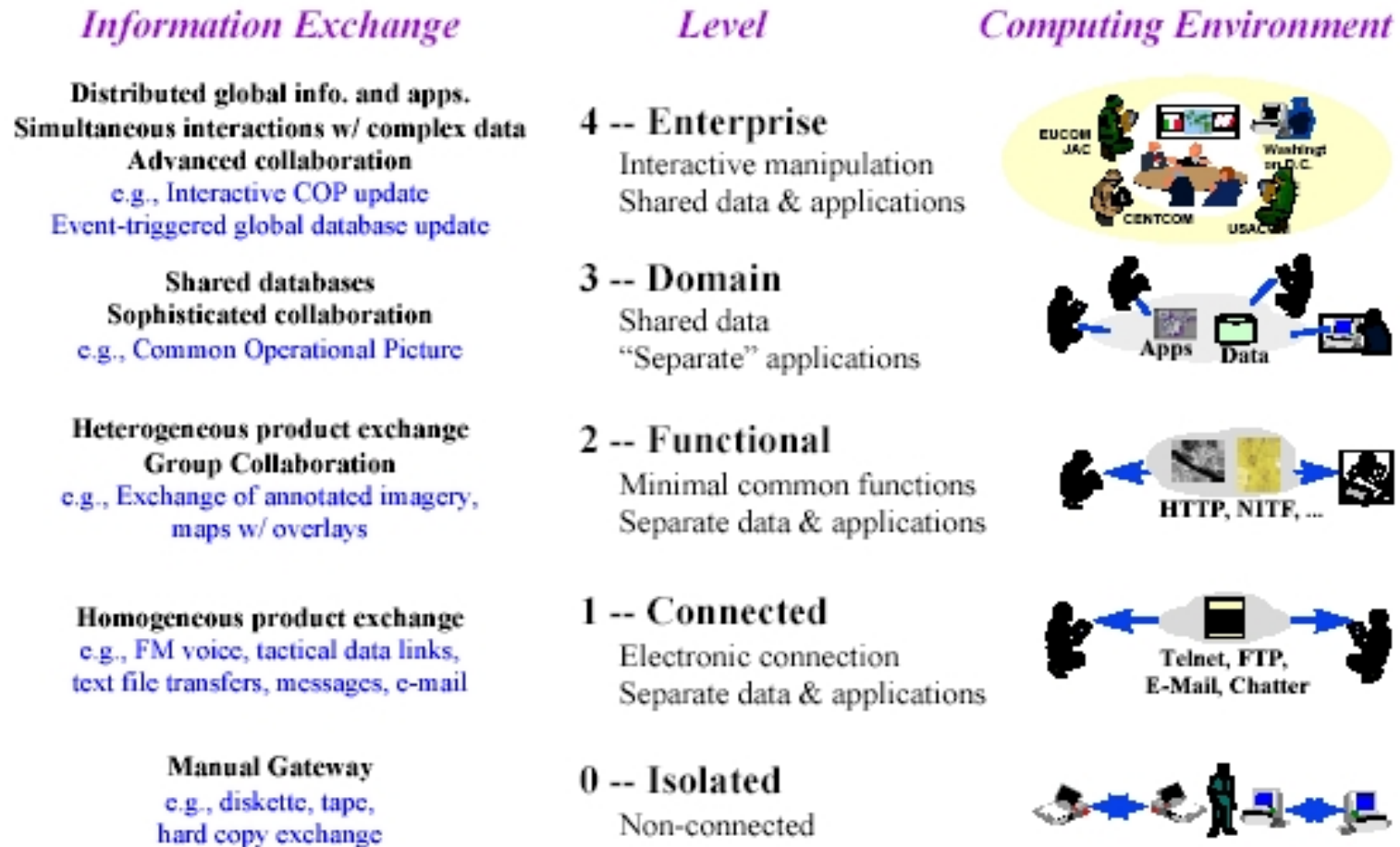
1.A.6 TADIL Comms Communications for Tactical Link 11, 16 and 22 Data Interchange.

1.A.7 SATCOM Connecting to UHF and EHF Satellite Comms.

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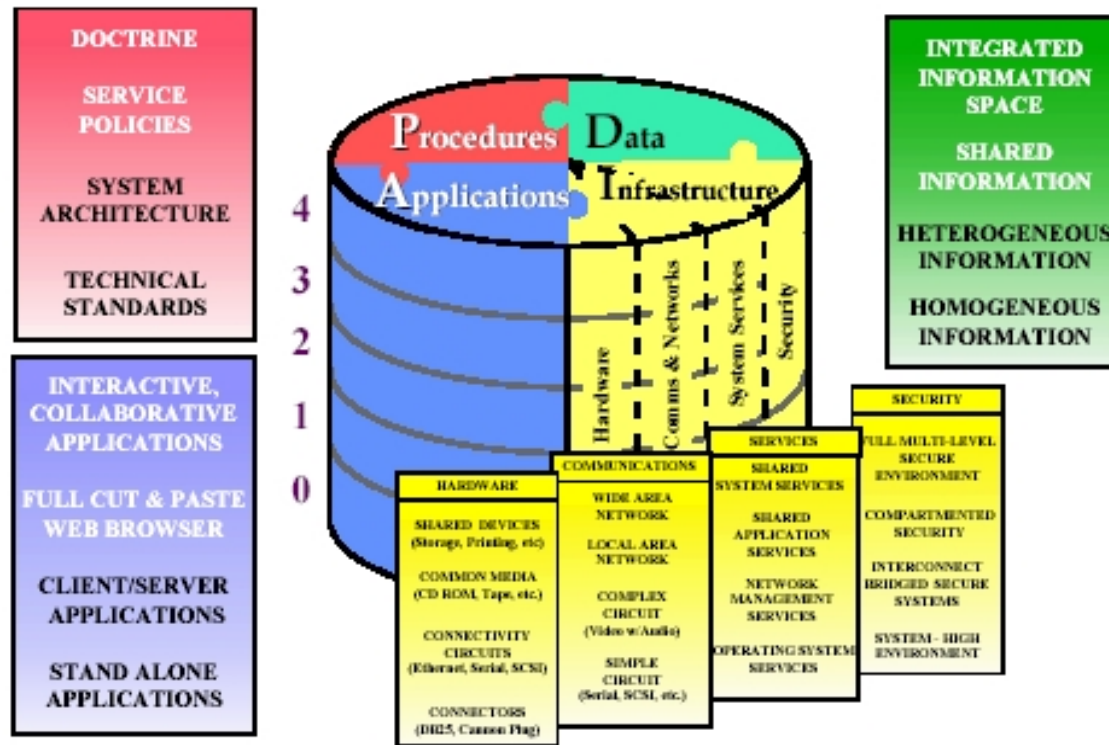


LSI Model: Levels of Interoperability





LISI Model: "PAID" Attributes



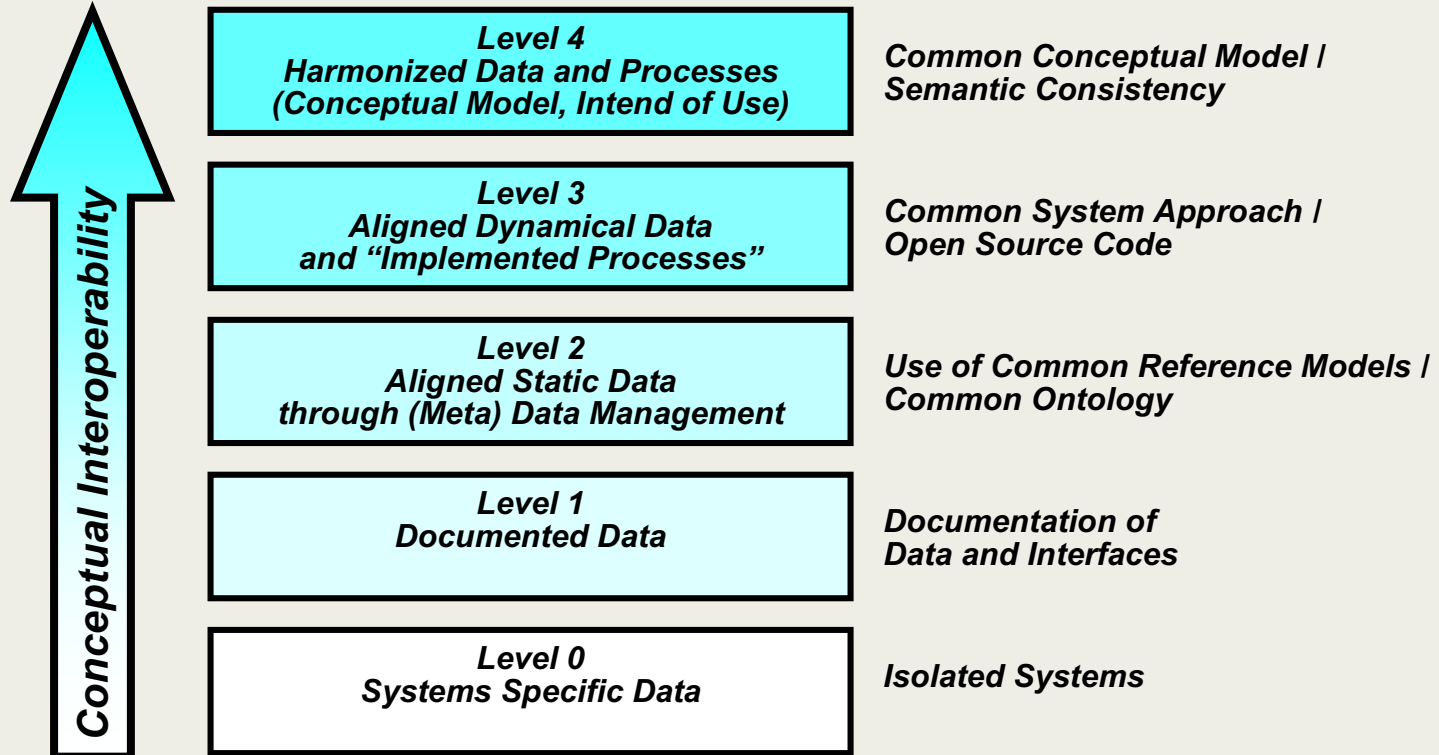
A "level" is enabled by a specific profile of P, A, I, & D attributes



LCIM model

Incorporates notion of **Conceptual interoperability**

- Explicit focus on semantic issues
- Maintains concept of increasing maturity, levels, etc.





SOSI model

Focus is on different domains of interoperability

- Programmatic, Constructive, Operational
- Different kinds of activities and relationships in each domain



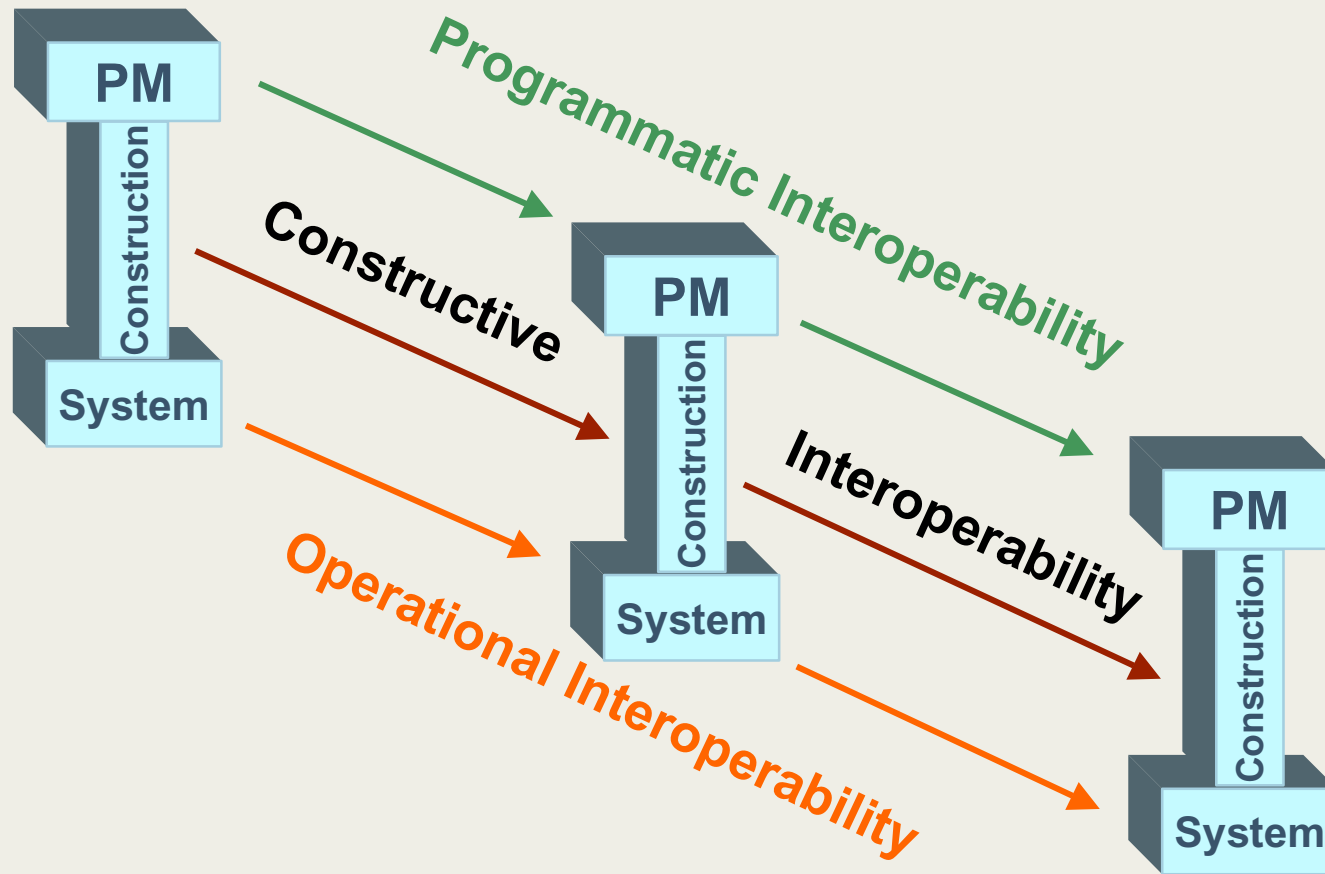
Activities performed to manage the acquisition of a system. Focus is on contracts, incentives, and practices such as risk management.

Activities performed to create and sustain a system. Focus is on architecture, standards, and commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) products.

Activities performed to operate a system. Focus is on interactions with other systems and with users.



SoSI - 2





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Some General Precepts

“Interoperability” is a multi-dimensional aspect of system engineering

- **Scope is far greater than simply interoperability of data**
- **Encompasses interoperability at the programmatic (and other) levels**
- **A model must include degrees of coupling, heterogeneity, synchronicity, . . .**

We can never anticipate fully the boundaries that a given system will be expected to operate within

Interoperability must be quantifiable to be achievable

Interoperability must be sustainable and sustained



Proposed Characteristics

Based on observations about desired types and levels of interoperability

Must be verified and validated through scenarios drawn from real programs

Characteristics chosen are not necessary discrete

List needs refinement through further research



Proposed Characteristics - 2

Six principal characteristics:

- Coupling
- Heterogeneity
- Synchronicity
- Boundedness
- Ownership
- Usage patterns

May be more characteristics

- These may be at a lower (or higher) level of importance



Coupling

Should permit modeling the aggregate degree of coupling in an interoperating system

- **Coupling among its elements (i.e., systems)**
- **Elements may themselves be collections of systems**
- **Continues recursively until some base level of complexity of internal coupling within an individual system**

Aggregate degree of coupling has implications for techniques, strategies, difficulty, etc. to create, use, or sustain the entire system of systems.



Heterogeneity

Should permit modeling both syntactic and semantic complexity

- **Each pair-wise set of systems will exhibit both kinds**
- **As the number of systems grows beyond a pair, this complexity grows combinatorially**

The degree of heterogeneity (and at both syntactic and semantic levels) may suggest the degree of difficulty in achieving and sustaining interoperability between the pair.



Synchronicity

Should permit modeling the rates at which elements (i.e., individual systems) undergo change

- **Change includes update, modernization, repair, and so forth**
- **Like other properties, this is recursive down to the level of individual components**

The degree to which individual systems' rates of change are synchronous will affect the degree to which the aggregate interoperability is sustainable (and perhaps achievable at all).



Boundedness

Should permit modeling the degree and nature of external and internal system boundaries

- **Some interoperable systems occurs when the aggregate collection of systems is initially known**
- **Other interoperable systems, actual extent of the system-of-systems is known to be unknown.**

Methods, techniques, and technologies used to bring about the aggregate interoperation will likely be different

- **Ongoing maintenance of the overall system will also differ**



Ownership

Should permit modeling the different qualities of authority over systems and elements of systems

- **Some complex systems of systems are methodically planned (e.g., U.S. DoD's Future Combat System)**
 - **Possible (or should be) to identify some controlling agency of the overall system(s)**
- **Some interoperability occurs opportunistically, when two (or more) diverse systems are linked in unplanned but useful ways**
 - **Usually impossible to identify any agency with responsibility for the overall aggregate system**

Will generally be very different processes, techniques, and methods used to bring about the interoperability between the constituent systems



Usage Patterns

Should permit modeling the conformity between intended and actual usage patterns throughout the system

- All elements of any system (i.e., components, entire systems) have an intended pattern of use
- An interoperating set of systems also has an intended pattern of use
 - This will conform to usage patterns of some elements, and conflict with usage patterns of other elements

Aggregate degree of harmony and conflict may determine the usability and robustness of the overall system

- This characteristics will be inconsistent across the system's elements



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Appropriate models have proven to be of considerable value in many engineering domains

We are presently in need of such models for integrating collections of software systems

Current efforts have produced several interesting and useful models

- **Much more work is needed**



Conclusion - 2

Trend toward ever-increasing interconnection between systems will continue

Nature and quality of these interconnections will be governed by decisions now being made

Effects of these decisions may be long-lasting



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