



Seneschal Incorporated

Newsletter

Sept 2010 From Our President

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Technology that Appears to be Magic

One of Arthur C. Clarke's most widely quoted 'laws' of prediction says:

Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

As you know, Seneschal has a sister firm in the United Kingdom ([Havenshire Limited](#)).

Havenshire now offers magic for modernization of legacy software. Seneschal can bring it to you too if you wish.

Let's say your business relies heavily on a large software system written in COBOL many years ago. The software has been patched over and over again to fix bugs, add new features and remove obsolete features. Its documentation has not kept up with all the changes. So much patching has made it such a convoluted mess that every time your IT staff touches it, something breaks.

But you need it.

Maybe you issue loans and accept repayments on the loans, and the software does all the calculations and tracking for you. Maybe you would love to offer new types of loans, but the very thought of adding the rules for new loan products into the software is daunting.

Maybe you write insurance policies, manage rental properties, run a retail store... Whatever it is that you do, the software has become essential. Unfortunately, the software is showing its age. *You can't live with it much longer but you can't live without it either.*

Traditionally, modernizing software like that has been painfully expensive and risky. You would have to hire analysts capable of wading through the old source code, figuring out what it does, and producing detailed documentation suitable for telling programmers what new replacement software must do to accomplish the same thing.

The analysts had to be expert, so they were costly—but as human beings, they could easily overlook something. If they did, the programmers would get incomplete instructions and would create new software that would not do the same work as your old software.

In business since 1992.
Member of the Independent
Computer Consultants
Association from 1999 until
closure of the organization
at the end of 2009. We
continue to honor the ICCA
Code of Ethics.

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We can now automate nearly all of the analysis and source code translation into new software so it is faster, cleaner, lower cost and much lower risk.

In early September, Havenshire became the only European firm offering this technology from ioSemantics, a new technology partner firm in the States. It's the next best thing to getting your legacy software modernization overseen by Dumbledore. Through Seneschal's sister relationship with Havenshire, we can bring it to you.

We feed your source code into the ioLogex™ engine, and it produces several results you can see and use:

- It deduces the business rules being carried out by your software.
- You can see the business rules, diagrammed as though an expert analyst laid them out for a modern object oriented programmer.
- You can see which original source code goes with which elements of the business rules.
- Suggested new software in a modern language is automatically generated, nicely structured, clean and ready for you to compile or tweak if you want to make a few manual changes.

ioLogex™ can handle big ugly systems.

Our top expertise went to the States to see it in action. There's no need to worry that your software is too big or too complex.

At the time, ioSemantics was analyzing a 750,000 line COBOL application built decades ago. We could see how it did such tricks as recognising and consolidating duplicated code. We could see existing COBOL source, object oriented documentation, which source code lines relate to which business rules, and the new cleanly structured Java source code that has been automatically generated.

Months worth of work was in front of us—done in just weeks (most of which was setup time), accurately, by a fraction of the size of team a standard project would need.

Everything else we have seen for legacy modernization is along the lines of providing some tools to facilitate manual modernization. This is so much more advanced and automates so much of the process, it looks like magic.

Not every legacy system is a great candidate. If yours is, this can smooth the way for you to update your proprietary software so it is easier and safer to enhance, cheaper to maintain, and can be tended by programmers with skills that are more readily available in the labour market.

We understand it's hard to believe how good ioLogex™ is until you see it.

Contact us for a free consultation to find out whether you qualify for a low cost small scale feasibility study. It's a great 'test drive' before committing to full modernization and results from the study feed directly into any follow-on modernization or migration effort.

Mixed Signals

We have mentioned before that the condition of one of our clients tends to be a reliable indicator of how the general economy is faring. As economists began hailing the end of the recession, our client continued to run only about 60% of its production equipment. Until sometime this year, even that equipment ran below its capacity.

Recently that equipment has been running as hard as it can. In mid-October, the dormant portion of the factory will be restarted to meet a sustained increase in orders from their customers.

Their product is especially critical for the heavy construction industry. High demand for their product comes only when enough of the world is strong enough to do a lot of serious building.

This is the first genuinely encouraging sign of a better economy that we have seen.

However, we see ongoing distortions in the availability of financing. We note changes in consumer spending, cutbacks in government spending, and reports from various shop owners that their sales are still dropping—in multiple countries.

Early in this downturn, we tried to prepare our readers for what was coming by publicly saying we expected a double dip. Mainstream media is beginning to print articles that echo what we have said all along to our friends, which goes beyond a double dip. This is not a garden variety recession. It is deeper, broader, more fundamental.

Instead of holding on for a year or so until recovery is underway, survival is now a matter of establishing a good footing for dealing with uncomfortable economic conditions over a long period.