

## PM WORLD TODAY - EDITORIAL – JANUARY 2008

# Ten Years On! Back to the Future of Project Management

*By David L. Pells, Managing Editor*

With 2008 we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the launch of ***PM World Today*** as an online publication. Originally launched as a quarterly eNewsletter in 1998 by **David Curling**, the creator of [www.pmforum.org](http://www.pmforum.org), *PM World Today* was one of the world's first online publications focused on project management. It was produced as a quarterly for five years by David Curling before becoming a bi-monthly eNewsletter which continued through 2004. In 2005, under Hugh Woodward's editorial direction, content of *PM World Today* was increased; production and distribution changed to monthly. With the January 2007 edition, *PM World Today* migrated to its own website, identity and life as a full-fledged project management eJournal.

We are proud of the current version, plans for the future, and our heritage. In the rapidly changing world of modern project management, anything that has lasted for ten years or more, even with significant changes, deserves respect. In this case, it is a testament to the vision and dedication of David Curling, and the support that he/we have garnered around the world of PM. Our history is also a testament to David Curling's understanding of the emerging role of the internet and worldwide web for communications, publishing and distribution of information. The last ten years have validated that understanding and vision.

But what now? What should *PM World Today* be or become? We have been able to build on David Curling's original vision. During 2007, with a growing global network of advisors, authors, correspondents and other contributors, we have greatly expanded the content, diversity, image and perspective of the publication. *PM World Today* is truly a global eJournal. We think that the contents have important educational and practical value. But it has also become more than a product!

*PM World Today* has grown into a global resource, and a service, for those who want to share knowledge. Project management experts and professionals worldwide can author and publish articles, case studies, papers and stories about project management. In the process, project management authorities, consultants and leaders can gain some visibility in the PM world. Finally, authors of serious

featured papers, fully supported by appropriate research and professional editorial standards, can qualify for professional development units (PDUs) for project management professional (PMP®) recertification. These services are offered at no cost to authors, a tremendous opportunity for professional development and PR.

Now we want to add a more human face. This month, with the addition of Personal Stories to *PM World Today*, we return to our human roots to embrace story telling as an educational process. Of course, stories can also be highly entertaining, but they can also be intense, emotional, empowering and instructional. We think the future of *PM World Today* is to continue to expand professionally and globally, but also to embrace our humanity as individuals. Project management may be both art and science, but it is practiced by human beings – the very basis for its power and potential. The future of *PM World Today*, and of the PM Profession, must therefore be about people.

## Back to the Future of PM!

### Globalization of Project Management

Underlying any current discussion on the future of project management is the issue of globalization. These issues cannot now be separated. Global issues and relations within the professional PM community have been discussed for decades, with IPMA in Europe being the leading voice as it grew to become the world's leading federation of national PM societies. The Project Management Institute (PMI®), now the world's largest PM organization with over 250,000 members worldwide and chapters in dozens of countries, initiated a globalization strategy and program in the mid-1990s and has since embraced a global vision for the organization. Nevertheless, serious thinking and writing about PM globalization was initiated by a handful of PM leaders around the world, some of whom I want to mention here.

In 1998 David Curling authored a white paper entitled "***Globalization of the Project Management Profession***" with which he began "We are in a rapidly changing face of world interaction that has had a profound effect on advancement of the practice of project management. The knowledge age has resulted in dramatic globalization of the project management discipline." David went on to describe various PM standards, certifications and organizational initiatives available or underway around the world at that time. He also stated "There is a need for an international organization for handling the business of the globalization of the project management profession."

David concluded his 1998 paper with the following: "Three issues face the international project management community. They are an international project management body of knowledge, an international project management organization

and professional certification. In the face of different political, economic, cultural and legal frameworks, I have reservations that an International Professional Certification is in the near future. I have serious doubts that an International Project Management Body of Knowledge will be prepared, that will satisfy all. I believe that an international project management organization is immediately at hand. This is dependent on full collegial cooperation between the professional project management organizations. Worldwide initiatives for the advancement of the project management discipline are increasing in intensity and will lead to the advancement of the global project management profession."

To one degree or another, David Curling was correct with his assessment and predictions in 1998. (A full copy of David Curling's paper can be viewed and/or downloaded at [http://www.pmforum.org/library/papers/1998/globalpmprof\\_curling.pdf](http://www.pmforum.org/library/papers/1998/globalpmprof_curling.pdf)).

I have quoted David Curling, not just because he was the founder of PM World Today and a visionary, but because he was also one of the few who was traveling the world and actually studying the global landscape of project management at that time. Others included **Wayne Abba, Russ Archibald, David Cleland, Kent Crawford, Bill Duncan, Davidson Frame, Ken Hartley, Eric Jenett, Robert Kimmons, Jim Snyder, Ron Waller and Bob Youker** in the USA; **Richard Balfour, Serge Pottle and Max Wideman** in Canada; **Paul Dinsmore and Marcio Prieto** in Brazil; **Lynn Crawford, Brian Kooyman, David Mathie, Roy Sargent and Alan Stretton** in Australia; **Martin Barnes, Peter Morris and Rodney Turner** in the UK; **Christophe Bredillet, Gilles Caupin, Morten Fangel, Roland Gareis, Klaus Pannenbacker, Brane Semolic** and other IPMA leaders in Europe; **Ed Naughton** in Ireland; **Adesh Jain** in India; **Hiroshi Tanaka** in Japan; **Bruce Rodrigues** in South Africa; **Vladimir Voropajev** in Russia; **Sergei Bushuyev** in Ukraine; and a handful of others. There were others, of course, but these were the people that I knew personally, and with whom David Curling and I met on a regular basis.

During 1995 – 2005, global cooperation among various PM professional societies was seriously advanced through the Global Project Management Forums (GPMF). Launched at the PMI'95 Seminar/Symposium in New Orleans, the GPMF sessions were meetings of representatives from various PM societies around the world, from all continents and many countries. They were open meetings and included discussions about PM education, certifications, standards, status and trends related to professional PM. The GPMF in 1998 in Long Beach, California was memorable due to the large number of participants and the enthusiasm reflected during the meeting. PMI's support for this initiative stopped in 2000, although IPMA continued to host GPMF meetings until the last one was held in New Delhi, India in 2005. By that time, the global PM landscape had changed dramatically, with the relationship between globalization and the future of project management much more obvious. For more about the GPMF, visit <http://www.pmforum.org/gpmf/index.htm>.

## PMI's 1998 Research on the Future of Project Management

During 1998, a PMI research team under the leadership of Michael Katagiri and Dr. Lewis Gedanski in the United States undertook a project entitled "*The Forecast and Assessment of the Future of Project Management Profession and the Project Management Institute.*" (PMI 1998) That effort looked at potentially positive or negative impacts on the project management profession and on PMI of global trends, both within and external to the profession itself.

The PMI team hired the services of a futurist firm to prepare an assessment of trends and implications applicable to the project management profession. The results of the study was a report that presented 96 trends and 101 implications, organized in nine broad categories as follows: globalization, demographic changes, information technology, social values, business practices, human resources, science and technology, construction and design, and markets for project management. The report was an excellent assessment of issues within each of those trend groupings, and their potential impact or implication for the project management profession. The PMI report provided a good assessment of issues affecting individual project managers and the future of the PM profession on a long term basis. Technology developments and social trends were addressed quite thoroughly.

As the PMI project team pointed out in its summary report, the PMI research project raised as many questions as it answered. PMI's 1998 research effort was an important step in developing an ongoing program to identify and assess global trends and their potential impact on the PM profession. However, some global issues were not well addressed in the report, such as global economic and political trends, and global mergers. In addition, the PMI report did not discuss significant global events, their potential impact and repercussions, which can have immediate and significant short and long term effects. In some countries and in some industries, the impact of significant events can be profound.

## Global Tides of Change, Impact & Aftershocks

During 1998, at the invitation of David Curling, I conducted some research on the subject of the impact of global trends and events on the project management profession. This culminated in one of the most important papers of my professional career, "***Global Tides of Change: Significant Recent Events and Trends Affecting Globalization of the Project Management Profession***", presented at the PMI'98 Symposium in Long Beach, California. (David Curling was the track chair for that presentation, which I remember clearly, as the room was full!) The paper was based on the proposition that globalization of, and the future of, the PM

profession cannot occur in a vacuum but rather must be considered in the context of global cultural, economic, industrial, political, social and technological conditions, factors, trends and events.

That paper contained a review of significant recent events around the world in those categories and suggested a decision-making model for global organizations. It was clear to me at the time that more research was needed. However, the Global Tides of Change paper was so well received that PMI included it, along with their research findings, in their book, *"The Forecast and Assessment of the Future of Project Management and the Project Management Institute"*, later that year. (See the 1998 paper at <http://www.pmforum.org/library/papers/1998/pells1.pdf>.)

An updated version of the paper, entitled ***"Global Impact: How global Events & Trends Might Affect the Project Management Profession Worldwide"***, was presented at the PMI'99 Symposium in Philadelphia in October 1999. A second update, more aptly titled *"Aftershocks..."* was then presented and was well received in November 1999 at the PMI South Africa Conference in Midrand near Johannesburg. By then, another year's worth of international trends and events were considered, so this last version included the most fully developed thinking. As stated in the paper, my conclusion at that time was "Globalization of the project management profession will require that professional associations understand global trends, the impact of significant global events, and changing conditions in various geographic regions, countries and industries.

I believe these conclusions are still valid, and that few if any of the world's PM societies are studying these issues (with the possible exception of PMI). What, for example, is the impact on the future of PM of the following?:

- China's economic development and emergence as a global economic power, including significant Chinese investments in Africa
- Entrée of China and India in the Space Race to the Moon
- The growing religiosity of many parts of the world
- Climate change and increasing number and impacts of natural disasters
- Increased global terrorism and security concerns
- Changing economic and political relations among the world's buyers and suppliers of oil and natural gas
- Changing global population and demographic conditions and trends

How can the future of anything be projected without taking more of these factors into consideration? And ultimately, we find that globalization becomes just another major factor to consider.

## The World of Project Management – Keeps Getting Bigger

Beginning in 2003, I began to try in earnest to understand “the big picture”, what I came to think of as “the world of project management”. I asked such questions as who are all of the stakeholders of PM? Who are the buyers and sellers of PM products and services around the world? How should PM in academia, industry, government and professional organizations be separated or viewed? I tried to look at modern PM as a management “technology” with a life cycle. Finally, I came up with a simplified model that helped me “get my arms around” the topic. That model became the basis for several papers and presentations at PMI chapters in the USA. Generally, I tried to summarize this model in my September 2006 PM World Today editorial entitled “*The World of Project Management: What is it?*”

As outlined in that paper, I conveniently organized the world of PM into the following seven major elements:

- 1) PM Research & Development
- 2) PM Body of Knowledge
- 3) PM Education & Training
- 4) PM Application & Experience (users of project management)
- 5) PM Supplier Marketplace (suppliers of PM products & services)
- 6) PM Profession
- 7) PM Communities

This model was useful for estimating market size, visualizing constituents and stakeholders, projecting future developments, and distinguishing between academic, professional and commercial aspects. This has also provided a useful structure for organizing some *PM World Today* contents.

If we consider project management as an industry or market, and if PM in traditional industries such as construction and defense are included, then we should realize that it is huge and getting bigger. There are now dozens of academic programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels worldwide, with hundreds of students. There are hundreds of consultants and thousands of professionals learning PM. There are hundreds of PM companies and thousands of PM products and services in the market around the world. There are hundreds of thousands of projects, project managers and project team members. With estimates of project investments worldwide in the trillions of dollars, the value of PM can easily be estimated at several hundred millions, perhaps a billion dollars. And the demand continues to increase everywhere.

Projects and Project management are crossing all boundaries, used in all industries, and needed in all organizations. And therein lies the problem. The world of PM is beginning to fragment.

## The Need for Categorization of Programs & Projects

The seminal paper on this topic, in my opinion, was "***A Global System for Categorizing Projects: The Need for, Recommended Approach to, Practical Uses of, and Description of a Current Project to Develop the System***" by Russell Archibald, PhD, Fellow of both APM and PMI. This paper was delivered at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Latin America PMI GOVSIG Forum on Project Management in Government in September 2004 in Brasilia, Brazil. This paper was actually an update of a similar paper delivered by Russ in Stockholm the previous November entitled "*State of the Art of Project Management: 2003*".

According to Russ Archibald, "...different types of projects often exhibit different life cycle models and require different methods of governance: prioritizing, authorizing, planning, executing and controlling." Russ explained the reasons and needs for a system for categorization of programs and projects, including the purpose and use of such a categorization system. He outlined a set of categorization criteria, suggests an approach and actually recommends a global set of first and second level categories. He also provided a method for classifying projects within categories and sub-categories according to project size, complexity, customer location and involvement, risk levels and other factors. Finally, he discussed the relationship between project categories and project life cycles, and PM maturity models being used by organizations.

Conclusions from Russ Archibald's 2004 paper are worth repeating here:

- Different project categories require different governance practices;
- Each project category and many sub-categories differ in a number of respects (he provides eight examples);
- A globally-agreed project categorization system is urgently needed and will have many practical uses (he provide five major examples);
- Application of "one size fits all" PM methods causes many project failures;
- Development of a global project categorization system is a major, multinational project itself.

Russ then described just such an International Project Categorization Project underway in Brazil. A copy of Russ Archibald's paper can be viewed at <http://www.russarchibald.com/AGLOBALSYSTEM1104.pdf>. His Brasilia presentation can be viewed at <http://www.pmforum.org/library/cases/globalslides.pdf>. An update on this topic, presented by Russ at ESC Lille in 2006, can be viewed at [http://www.pmforum.org/library/papers/2006/Purp\\_Meth\\_Lille%202005.doc](http://www.pmforum.org/library/papers/2006/Purp_Meth_Lille%202005.doc). I also want to note that Russ drew on some prior research and papers on this topic by Lynn Crawford, Brian Hobbs, Peter Morris, Rodney Turner and Robert Youker.

Russ also presented and published several subsequent papers on this topic with Professor Vladimir Voropajev in Russia and Europe.

By the way, Russ also offered his predictions on the future of PM at a PMI conference in Moscow, Russia in 2005, a summary of which can be seen at <http://www.pmforum.org/blogs/news/2005/10/project-management-pioneer-announces.html>.

## Multiple Futures

The preceding discussion leads to a somewhat obvious conclusion: If projects and project management vary by category (type of project, industry, complexity, etc.) and those different types of projects have different life cycles and maturity factors, then the status and future of project management in those areas will also vary. This in fact is a conclusion that I have reached based on another seminar paper by Hiroshi Tanaka, published in 2005, entitled "***The Changing Landscape of Project Management.***" According to Tanaka, "project management models can be drawn from such attributes as project management structure and methods, socio-economic drivers that prompt the build-up of the model in question, typical project management techniques offered by the model, primary application areas, and mechanisms for popularizing the model.

In this important paper, Hiroshi presented "seven models over four generations", including the following (excerpts from his paper):

- Classic Model A – based on early development from the 1950s and since then in the space, defense, engineering and construction industries, this model represents planning and management methods for capital investment and national or social infrastructure projects; is highly robust; and heavily focuses on the triple constraints of quality (or technical), time and cost performance.
- Modern Model B - Beginning in the 1980s, more flexible models were developed for use in a wider range of industries and with more balanced PM processes integrating both "hard" PM processes such as quality, resources/cost, time and procurement, with "soft" PM processes such as scope, risk, communications, people/human resources, organization and integration. This was most reflected in PM bodies of knowledge published by PMI in the USA and APM in the UK.
  - Sub-model B1 – Utilized mainly by manufacturing companies to serve as a planning and management framework for strategic new product development. Main users are aircraft, automobiles, pharmaceuticals

- Sub-model B2 – Developed for fast moving global business operations as in the information services, telecommunications and information technology industries, characterized by easy entry and less experience.
- Sub-model B3 – Project management as change agent for agencies, corporations and other organizations, used for business transformation, to introduce new services and for other organizational change programs, especially governmental agencies.
- Neo-Classical Model – Integration of classical PM with some elements of Modern PM, applied on large global projects by international contractors and with special conditions and aspects, especially in the oil & gas, petrochemicals, and similar industries. Special PM methods include strategic alliances, owner/contractor integration, joint ventures, structured project financing, front-end loading, enhanced work breakdown structures, global procurement systems, global IT and communications systems, and multi-national workforce, with related issues.
- Strategic Model – Developed over the last decade, this model stresses the integration of project management with business or organizational strategies and plans; linking organizational strategy with projects through portfolio project management (PPM), program management, and enterprise PM. This is now being embraced across all elements of business and industry.
- Versatile Model – A hypothetical model expected to evolve in the future, based on versatile, user-friendly management methods for all organizations.

In my opinion, Mr. Tanaka's discussion supports the importance that Russ Archibald has assigned to the need for an international categorization model for programs and projects, which would seem to mesh with Hiro's range of models and maturity considerations. Tanaka's discourse also suggests multiple futures, depending on which industry, category of projects and PM models are used, which may vary from organization to organization. Hiroshi Tanaka's classic paper can be viewed at <http://www.pmforum.org/library/papers/2005/ChangingLandscapePM130404.pdf>.

### **The Future as a Hot Topic - Some other recent opinions**

The Future of Project Management seems to be a popular topic for PM conferences and events today. Perhaps this is natural, but in my opinion, most authors do not consider the big picture enough, make too many straight line projections, or have a too narrow focus. Some have suggested that PM will merge with general management, that PM is being replaced by Portfolio Management, that professional

PM will be regulated, or that PM will disappear as a professional discipline altogether as it become ubiquitous in society at large.

## In Summary - Some Personal Projections

This paper has covered a lot of ground, but still nowhere near enough. A more systematic approach is needed, in order to look at the bigger world of PM on a regular basis, to consider major trends and impacts, to consider various practices and models across multiple industries, and to incorporate professional perspectives and knowledge. Nevertheless, I want to offer some conclusions based on the above. It seems to me that the future of project management must include:

- Multiple futures, depending on the type of project, maturity of organization or industry, and preferred model.
- Models with global applicability
- More responsive and versatile models and applications, as projects and PM are affected by global trends and events.
- More robust professional approaches, based on broader understanding of the role and potential for modern PM in society.
- More diversity, more communities, more varieties of projects and PM.

Global cooperation is needed among PM professional societies to recognize and document a global family of models, standards and qualifications (just as David Curling stated ten years ago). One size does not fit all (As Russ Archibald has so eloquently pointed out) and never will, for a variety of reasons. I predict that PM in its various forms will continue to grow rapidly for the next fifty years, with a variety of models used in various industries, with global PM communities of practice growing as well. PMI has realized this recently, as evidenced by its restructuring of its virtual communities – where more growth can be expected. It is why IPMA is growing rapidly again, as smaller groups embrace more democratic and independent organizational models. As more individuals are empowered by the internet and global communications technologies, more diversity and variety are sought and embraced.

We also recognize these trends at PMForum. Thank you for reading this article and for visiting [www.pmworldtoday.net](http://www.pmworldtoday.net).

Best wishes for a happy and successful 2008, and good luck on your projects.

Respectfully,  
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David L. Pells is the Managing Editor of PM World Today and of [www.pmforum.org](http://www.pmforum.org) one of the world's leading online sources of project management news and information. David is an internationally recognized leader in the field of professional project management, with over thirty years' experience in project management related activities and positions. His professional experience includes a wide variety of programs and projects, including engineering, construction, transit, defense and high technology, and project sizes ranging from several thousand to ten billion dollars. He served on the board of directors of the Project Management Institute (PMI®) twice, and was awarded PMI's Person of the Year award in 1998 and Fellow Award in 1999. David can be reached via email at: [editor@pmforum.org](mailto:editor@pmforum.org)