In attendance: Giulia Brofferio, Maureen Evans, Nancy Fraser, Robin Jenneve, Allen Matlick, Kathy Scheidemen, and Tim Schmidt.

Prior to the meeting Maureen distributed the following agenda:

#1 Recap & Feedback on GUS training Session held on 8/23/06
#2 Topics & Priorities for future Training Sessions
#3 Further discussion on Electronic Reports
#4 Other Items

Allen circulated the GUS Development Activity report for the period 8/09/06 – 8/27/06 prior to the meeting.

There were no specific questions from the committee with respect to the activity report. Maureen noted that the activity on the report does not mirror the GUS web-based tracking system for bugs and feature requests. Allen confirmed this and explained that the web-system is clunky and needs to be improved. Allen also pointed out that only about 1/3 of users comments/requests were submitted via the web. Maureen expressed the hope that greater involvement of GUS users on the listserv and in training classes may increase the use of the web tracking system.

A long discussion ensued about the training session (agenda items 1 & 2) held on 8/23. The following points were discussed:

- The meeting may have been too long and overwhelming in the scope of information presented. It may be useful to keep the first part of any similar type meeting more focused. The benefit of the detailed training was that it provided users with ideas of how to use GUS to suit their needs and departments that could provide assistance. It was agreed that smaller, follow up, training sessions may be useful in narrowing the discussion and fostering questions from attendees.

- A request was made to provide handouts at training classes but the exec committee agreed that it would rather refer attendees to the GUS website for more information.

- The possibility of adding color to GUS screens was discussed both in terms of color coding modules and providing easier to read screens for users. There was agreement that color coding modules might be something to pursue in the future but was not identified as a priority for the time being. Allen explained that versions of 4D 2003.x and earlier defaulted the background of non-enterable data fields to gray. When the fields were enterable the background changed to white.
This was intended to provide an easy visual cue to users to indicate whether the data field was enterable. 4D 2004 has changed this behavior. All fields, enterable or not, have a white background. Enterable fields are now surrounded by a very thin black line, while non-enterable fields are surrounded by a very thin gray line. In Allen’s opinion, the difference is subtle enough, particularly with form elements that already have lines around them, that many users will not perceive the change.

- A suggestion was made by one of the meeting’s attendees to have a tutorial on how to generate custom reports from 4D. The committee did not feel that there were the resources available to make this a priority at the current time.

- The frequency of follow up training classes was discussed and the understanding reached that relatively frequent meetings (perhaps as often as every 6 weeks) in the near term would be beneficial in terms of training, networking and contributing to the GUS documentation efforts.

- It was suggested that hands-on training classes could be hosted in a computer lab but that there would be costs associated with this. The committee did not express an interest in following up on this idea at the present time.

- Another attendee at the meeting made several suggestions for revising GUS reports. This led to the committee discussing agenda item #3.

Allen provided the committee with a summary of PI feedback regarding electronic reports that he compiled. There were 6 respondents and no consistency in terms of preferred report content or delivery. Maureen observed that resource constraints of individual departments will likely limit the options that can be implemented. Allen updated the committee on his progress on programming GUS to include the option to send reports electronically. The operating system on Macs will accommodate the change more readily than PC’s.

There was discussion about the potential problem of sending PI’s with a large number of projects (20+) a separate e-mail with reports as attachments for every project. The committee agreed that PI’s receiving such a large number of reports monthly is likely limited (<5%) and e-mailing reports may very well be a viable delivery mechanism for the overwhelming number of PI’s. It was also clear that each department may incorporate electronic reports differently into their work flow and some will use an archive of these reports to replace paper records. To enable departments the maximum flexibility it was decided that programming efforts would continue to focus on enabling GUS to “push reports” out of the system with the understanding that some departments may e-mail them directly to PI’s and others might move the files to web based access points.

Additional programming will be needed to modify the report menu in GUS to accommodate these changes. While effort is being devoted to modifying the delivery of
GUS reports the committee agreed to simultaneously work on redesigning the summary report. Toward this goal the committee agreed to form a focus group of 6-8 department representatives to meet once or twice to discuss what features would be most useful in the summary report. Giulia will chair this group.

Other topics discussed briefly (agenda item #4) included a status update on the rewrite of the purchasing module (suspended since effort was shifted to electronic reports three weeks before) and the status of the CNT recruitment. No additional applications have been received and no interviews have yet been conducted. In an effort to stimulate interest in the job, a note describing the position will be sent to the ABOG listserv.

Regarding the start of the documentation project, Maureen will contact Sue Mishra to work out the details.

Meeting ended at 3:15.

Action items:

Maureen to follow up with Sue Mishra and send job posting notice to ABOG listserv.

Giulia to contact members of focus group to discuss summary report.