

Formalism and Informality in RE

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Abstract

Requirements Engineering lies at the meeting place between the formal and the informal in software development. Computer programs are effectively formal constructs, admitting treatment by mathematical methods based on type theory, preconditions and postconditions, and invariants. But the world of human beings and physical objects in which the requirements are located is informal, and can not be adequately treated by purely formal methods.

This talk explores the relationship between the formal and the informal in Requirements Engineering. Some ideas are put forward that can help in the crucial but very difficult task of formalising essentially informal requirements and devising adequate software specifications to satisfy them.

About the Speaker

*Michael Jackson has been active in software development methodology for forty years. He has described his work in many seminars, courses and invited presentations, in his books *Principles of Program Design* (Academic Press 1975), *System Development* (Prentice Hall 1983) and *Software Requirements and Specifications* (Addison-Wesley/ACM Press 1995), and also in many papers in books, journals and conference proceedings. His most recent book, *Problem Frames: Analysing and Structuring Software Development Problems*, was published by Addison-Wesley at the beginning of 2001.*

Having established his own company in 1970 and run it for many years, he now works as an independent consultant in London, and as a part-time researcher at AT&T Research in Florham Park, NJ. He has held several visiting posts at universities in England and Scotland.