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Resource Life Cycle Analysis

A Critical Component of Enterprise Database

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1. Background

Ron Ross, a well known “data” consultant formalized his ideas about corporate resources and their life cycles in a 1992 monograph, *Resource Life Cycle Analysis A Business Modeling Technique for IS Planning*¹. Resource Life Cycle Analysis (RLCA) uses a form of business modeling to perform information strategic planning. Ross identifies the need for this type of planning because:

“...It is therefore unreasonable to attempt to satisfy both dimensions of scope---i.e. “process vs. data”---in a single type of project. I believe strategic planning should produce two types of projects --- one for “data” and one for “process”. . . Scoping for each type of project is orthogonal---no attempt is made to satisfy both dimensions at once---so that the result is like weaving a fabric. . . Creating such a data-based infrastructure clearly requires early attention to data architecture for at least some of the “data” projects before any “process” project kicks off. That means pursuing high-level or “framework” entity modeling for at least some of the individual data projects. . . during or in parallel with the strategic planning phase.”

In Ross’s parlance, “data” projects refer to those that exist under the Whitemarsh Knowledge Worker Framework column, Database Object, while “process” projects are those that fit under the Business Information System column. The Knowledge Worker Framework book can be obtained from the Whitemarsh website, www.wiscorp.com.

2. Resource Life Cycle Analysis Objectives

The goal of RLC analysis is to build a bridge between the operational level needs of information management organizations and the strategic level organization business process needs required by upper management. The main goal of the strategic level is to identify and describe the major resources that are essential to the enterprise’s survival, and the main goal of the Information systems organization is to plan, develop, deliver, and maintain the various information systems projects that are required to implement the enterprise resources in the most effective manner possible. RLC analysis achieves this bridge goal by determining:

- The resource life cycle networks
- The database object projects and business information system projects and establishing their proper sequence for analysis, design, and implementation.

¹ The monograph can be obtained from Database Research Group, Inc., Boston, Massachusetts. ISBN 0-941049-01-9



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- A strategic view of the ongoing information systems development and major maintenance work

RLC analysis determines three components of the resource life cycle networks, that is, the resource, life cycle and the precedence vectors between resource life cycles. A **resource** is an enduring asset of value to the enterprise. The **life cycle** is a linear identification of the major states that must exist within life of the resource. The life cycle of a resource represents the resource's "cradle to grave" set of state changes. The **precedence** is a vector that may occur between nodes on different resource life cycles, and thus indicates which resource life cycle node enables another resource life cycle node.

