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The TAG Collector - A Tool for Atlas Code Release Management

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The Tag Collector is a web interfaced database application for release management. The tool is tightly coupled to CVS, and also to CMT, the configuration management tool. Developers can interactively select the CVS tags to be included in a build, and the complete build commands are produced automatically. Other features are provided such as verification of package CMT requirements files, and direct links to the package documentation, making it a useful tool for all ATLAS users.

The software for the Atlas experiment contains about 1 MSLOC. It is organized in over 50 container packages containing about 500 source code packages. One or several developers maintain each package. ATLAS developers are widely distributed geographically.

The Tag Collector was designed and implemented during the summer of 2001, in response to a near crisis situation. It has been in use since September 2001. Until this time the ATLAS librarian constructed a build of the software release after a cascade of e-mails from developers; communicating the correct CVS code repository version tag of their respective packages. This was subject to all sorts of human errors, and inefficient in our multi-time zone environment. In addition, it was difficult to manage the contents of a release. It was all too easy for a prolific developer to introduce a well-intentioned change in his package just before a build, often with unsuspected border effects. Developers were also asking for regular, and frequent developer builds.

The tool has proved extremely successful, and features that are outside the scope of the original design have been requested. Requirements for a new version were collected during 2003, culminating in a formal review in December 2003. The new version is currently being designed. It will be more flexible and easier to maintain.

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