

History of MLS (Member and Leader Services)

Written by Larry Jones
Tuesday, 01 July 2008

In 1999, the Member and Statistical Records Department (MSR) began considering a rewrite of the local unit Member Information System (MIS) and Financial Information System (FIS). Since 1986 priesthood leaders had been using separate applications to manage local Church unit membership (MIS) and finances (FIS). MIS and FIS were available only to Church units in the U.S. and Canada and a limited number of English-speaking units outside the U.S. and Canada. In 1998, a separate tool, Convert Data Entry (CDE), was introduced for use by missions to submit convert information needed to create membership records. MIS, FIS, and CDE were developed in a text-based DOS environment. In April 2000, AP Software was contracted to help the Church in this rewrite.

During 2000, local leaders in 17 countries were visited to determine local unit needs for a new software application that could:

1. Record member ordinances (e.g., baptism/confirmation) and activities (e.g., marriage).
2. Provide tools that support local priesthood and auxiliary leaders in their member-nurturing responsibilities.
3. Record member donations and manage local unit finances.
4. Support mission convert information reporting requirements.
5. Support multiple languages and writing systems.

Also, an analysis of local infrastructure and security issues was made during these visits (e.g., Web availability, telephone infrastructure, building security, electrical grid, etc.).

Two primary architecture designs were considered for MLS development: Web-browser based or a stand-alone Java application. After seeing the limitations of computer skills in local units and the poor communications infrastructure in many international areas (e.g., lack of Web access and poor telephone infrastructure), it was decided to develop MLS in Java. The remainder of 2000 was used to research and prototype MLS. Significant development began in 2001.

The MLS project was planned to be released in three phases, with each phase building upon the previous phase:

- CDE (Convert Data Entry): To be used by missions to submit convert information needed to create a membership record, replacing the current DOS CDE version.

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- **MLS 1.0:** To be used by selected international local Church units, this phase provided basic membership and finance functionality. This would be the first local unit software made available to units outside of the U.S. and Canada.

- **MLS 2.0:** To be used by all authorized local Church units. MLS 2.0 provided full membership and finance functionality, replacing MIS and FIS in the U.S. and Canada.

CDE and MLS 1.0 development started in early 2001. CDE shipped during October 2001. MLS 1.0 shipped during February 2002. MLS 2.0 shipped during December 2002.

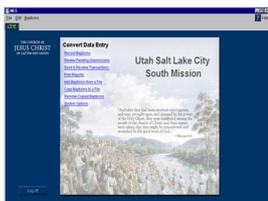
Convert Data Entry (CDE)

CDE was the first product to come out of the MLS project. CDE is used to record and submit convert information needed to create membership records. It is also the vehicle used to report a mission's official monthly baptism and confirmation statistics back to a mission. It was written entirely in Java using the JVM 1.4.0. CDE 1.0 was piloted in two missions in October 2001. In February 2002, CDE began full rollout to all missions.

CDE was designed to be the "proving grounds" for MLS. It contained the fundamental pieces that MLS would be built upon, namely:

1. An application written in Java.
2. A database written in Java (from Pointbase).
3. An interface to submit convert membership data to the Church Membership Information System (CMIS). CMIS is the system that manages individual Church member information and is the official repository for all membership information.
4. Used Afaia instead of the RemoteWare that MIS and FIS used.

CDE 1.0

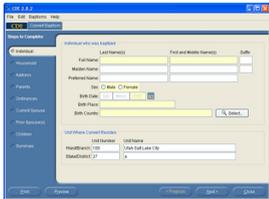


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This is the CDE interface in CDE 2.8.2. It is a basic data entry system (e.g., Crystal Reports) for entering missions or CDE 2.8.2.

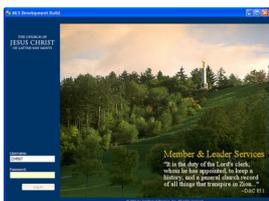


Member and Leader Services (MLS)

MLS 1.0

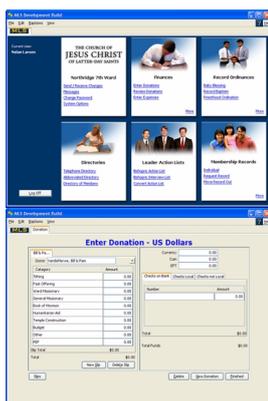
After the CDE pilot was successfully completed, MLS 1.0 was well into development. MLS 1.0 was planned to provide basic membership and finance functionality that would be used in international units where they previously had no local unit computers or software. MLS 1.0 first shipped in February 2002 to selected stakes in Australia and New Zealand. MLS 1.0 used the JVM 1.4.0.

MLS Prototype



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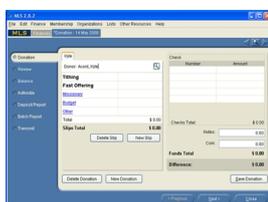


MLS 2.0

MLS 2.0 added functionality provided by MIS and FIS: home and visiting teaching, organization information, certificate printing, temple recommend tracking, stake functionality, check writing, and budgeting.

MLS 2.0 was to begin the replacement of MIS and FIS in four pilot stakes in Utah in December, 2002. By June 2003, MLS 2.0.4 began shipping to all domestic units.

MLS Today



As of June 2008, the current MLS version is MLS 2.8.3. It uses the JVM 1.6.0. MLS is used in 90% of all Church units, in 65 countries. MLS supports 17 languages and four writing systems. Four languages and two additional writing systems will be added during 2008.

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From its simple beginning to today, MLS's functionality has grown beyond its original membership and finance roles. As for the future of MLS, additional functionality will continue to be added as needs change and as directed by priesthood councils.

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