MDENet – the home of model-driven engineering

Newsletter #2

In this issue:

1. Welcome from the network co-director
2. Our first year in review
3. Coming up next year
4. Your checklist of things to do

Welcome from the network co-director

Welcome to this second edition of the MDENet newsletter, and thank you for your (continued? new?) interest in the network!

MDENet officially began on January 1st, 2021. As we approach the end of our first year, it seems appropriate to look back and see what has happened so far, and to look forward to the second year of the network.

One thing we certainly did not expect when we wrote the proposal was that our entire first year would take place during the most serious pandemic since 1918...

We wish you a healthy and peaceful festive season and all the best for 2022.

Perdita Stevens, co-director, MDENet

Our first year in review

The first major undertaking of MDENet was to get our virtual homes organised. You are probably aware of the public face of the network, website `https://mde-network.com/`, and of our community site (the "platform"), `https://community.mde-network.org`. If you're not already registered on the latter, do come. Personally I'm finding that the hard part is remembering to find time regularly to visit, but when I do there are always interesting things to read and this will be more true the more we hang out there – so maybe make it a Monday morning ritual to ease into your week?

The work of MDENet is loosely organised around three Working Groups, each of which has been meeting roughly monthly. If you're interested in joining in the work, please let us know!

Working Group 1, Driving Future Research

This working group is our focus for facilitating research that will make MDE technology more relevant and better adapted to potential users.

We have held five Research Demonstrations online, covering tools and technologies from machine learning monitoring to model management pipelines. You can find videos of any you may have missed, on the MDENet YouTube channel.

Our first Thematic Workshop was on the topic of AI and Data Science and MDE. Many interesting discussions took place and we hope some of these will give rise to future joint work.

An important means for MDENet to foster such joint work is the Seedcorn Fund. This aims to provide small amounts of funding to support new collaborations between industrial and academic partners, perhaps to help you scope out a feasible larger project. Check out how to apply at the funding page `https://mde-network.com/funding/`.

Working Group 2, Training the IT Industry

This is our educational focus. Working Group 2 aims to help MDENet provide high-quality training and learning resources, and, just as important, help guide people to what exists already.

Our first official training event, on the Epsilon toolkit, was well attended and much appreciated. As I write, our second, by our very own Steffen Zschaler on GEMOC, is about to take place. If you missed either of these you can catch up by watching the videos on the MDENet YouTube channel.

The Epsilon Playground, which already allows online access to the Epsilon tools without needing to install anything, seems like a promising basis for giving easy access to other MDE tools, and we're exploring how that can be done – watch this space.

If you've spent time on the MDENet community site (the "platform"), you may have noticed the collection of Learning Resources starting to take shape. The idea is to make this a great starting point for looking for material about any aspect of MDE – not so much because tutorial material etc. is actually hosted by us, but more because we curate and point at coherent collections of what is already out there. It's slow going getting these developed, though. Do let us know if there's something you'd like to see – or especially, if you'd like to volunteer to develop it!

Working Group 3, Building the MDE Brand

Part of what MDENet wants to do is to increase recognition of "model-driven" terminology in relevant communities, in order to make it easier for people who might collaborate or use one another's work to recognise its relevance. We feel there has been a tendency for MDE ideas to get reinvented in different places and that this sometimes hampers reuse of good ideas and limits synergy.

WG3 has been responsible for commissioning the graphics you see on the MDENet website and community site, and there are now also several banners that you are encouraged to use whereever you'd like to make known your affiliation with MDENet – perhaps on your own website, in your email signature, or on your slides when you give a talk. You can find these at `https://community.mde-network.org/posts/mdenet-websiteemail-banners` (or search banners on the platform).

We've also put together the first version of a terminology explainer, which you can find at `https://mde-network.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MDE-glossary.pdf`. More contributions are welcome!

Finally, our most recent innovation is the MDENet Coffee Morning. This is a completely informal drop-in online event, intended to be an opportunity to chat, ask questions about what's going on, or just share your coffee break with some friendly people. We're running these about once a month as a trial at the moment – if they prove popular, we could do them more often. No need to register. You can find these at `https://community.mde-network.org/events/virtual-coffee-break`, or search coffee on the platform. The next one is January 13th 2022 at 10:30am.

Coming up next year

The most notable upcoming event is our very first Annual Symposium, on January 26th and 27th 2022. We had hoped this would be an in-person event at King's College London, but unfortunately the coming of the omicron variant has forced us to take the event online. On the plus side, this may make it easier for some of you to attend. The programme is still being finalised as I write, but there will be something for everyone: long and short talks, tutorial material, challenge descriptions and a panel. For registrations and emerging details, visit `https://mde-network.com/annual-symposium-2022/`.

There will also, of course, be new research demonstrations, training events, thematic workshops, coffee mornings and more. Something you'd especially like to see, or to offer? Come and post on the platform about it!

Your checklist of things to do

(All of these are optional really, of course!)

1. Register for the Annual Symposium online

2. Make a plan for visiting the MDENet Platform regularly. Perhaps you'd like to ease yourself into your week by doing this on Monday mornings?

3. Consider getting involved in one of the Working Groups

4. Could an application to the Seedcorn Fund help you get an industry-academia collaboration off the ground?

5. Is there a tool, a technology or an idea you'd like to develop a Learning Resource about? Would a bit of funding help?

6. Come and say hello at Virtual Coffee!

Happy 2022 and good modelling!