Date: 6 May 1998
To: J3
From: Van Snyder
Subject: Comments about command line arguments
References: 98-135

The brevity of the process by which command line arguments were adopted has led to an unfortunate consequence that ought to be re-examined.

The `argument_length` program argument is never larger than `LEN(argument_text)`, but the processor is not required to pass all of every argument. It is therefore impossible to detect the condition that not all of the command argument has been passed to the program.

This illustrates that one should be careful what one asks for. At meeting 144, during discussion of this matter, I suggested it would be more convenient if `argument_length(i)` $\leq$ `LEN(argument_text)`. What I had in mind was `argument_length(i)` $\leq$ `LEN(argument_text)` $\leq$ length-of-longest-argument.

I got the first inequality, but not the second; the processor can allocate whatever length it likes for `argument_text`.

The `argument_length` argument should always reflect the correct length of the argument, not the minimum of the actual argument length and `LEN(argument_text)`. Otherwise, it is impossible to detect the condition that not all of the command argument has been passed to the program.