Requirements Engineering as a Failed Discipline

Richard N. Taylor
Institute for Software Research
University of California, Irvine
http://www.ics.uci.edu/~taylor
Why Are Requirements Done So Poorly, After the Fact, or If at All, in So Many Applications?

- Standard answers:
  - Bad engineering
  - Bad discipline
  - Lack of good mathematical training
  - Lack of time
Maybe the Reason Is Different

- Maybe it is because it hasn’t proven useful
- Maybe it is because you can’t do a good job with requirements until the architecture is in hand
- Maybe it is a matter of size and complexity
- Maybe Petroski is right: failure is the driver of engineering and the basis for innovation
Alternative: Architectures in the Lead

- Think of requirements as incremental improvements needed to existing architectures, or as compositions of architectures
- Architectures provide a frame of reference
  - a vocabulary
  - a basis for describing properties
  - a basis for analysis
- Create new architectures based upon experience with and improvement to pre-existing architectures

Are All Architectures up to the Task of Being “Improved” in a Cost-effective Way?
Do We Need Requirements at all?

- You do have to know your objective before you start new work.
- You do need a contract with the customer
  - (but when you are building to a market?)
- But let (substantive) architectures:
  - Provide the vocabulary
  - Provide the basis for discussion
  - … as well as *being* the solution basis
- Thus: new objectives and solutions, from old problems and old solutions