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OASIS RESPONSE TO JTC1/SC34
34 N 1095
15 October 2008

This communication responds on behalf of OASIS to ISO/IEC JTC1/SC34's document 34 N 1095, a Liaison Statement regarding maintenance of ISO/IEC 26300, transmitted by SC34's secretariat on 3 October 2008.

OASIS is the PAS submitter under JTC1's PAS rules for ISO/IEC 26300, commonly known as OpenDocument Format for Office Application or "ODF".   The original OASIS Standard v1.0 was submitted to JTC1 and its transposition approved by JTC1 as an ISO/IEC International Standard.

A. Historical cooperation.

OASIS notes that there is a strong history of cooperation between JTC1 and OASIS on this work.   It is our expectation that both actions and statements from representatives of both organizations will continue to be positive and constructive. Willingness to collaborate has been evident from the start of this submission process.   OASIS was entitled, after the successful (and unanimous) JTC1 transposition vote for IS 26300, to ask that the final standard be published exactly as submitted. Instead, the OASIS TC electively reviewed the significant volume of optional comments provided by JTC1 National Bodies with their unconditional 'yes' votes, and produced a "Second Edition" of v1.0 of the standard for final, joint publication by JTC1 and OASIS. That "Second Edition" voluntarily incorporated a large number of the optional JTC1 comments. This demonstrated the readiness of OASIS and its TC to work cooperatively with JTC1, and incorporate feedback from JTC1 constituencies.

B. The concept of collaborative maintenance.

The JTC1 PAS rules acknowledge that vital, credible consortia may create worthy specifications, which JTC1 may endorse via transposition. Some stakeholders in JTC1 have commented that the various rules for shared work (PAS, fast track, etc.) are contradictory or incomplete. Some rules might assume that a standards consortium will author a specification and then abandon it to JTC1 without any interest; but historically, the PAS rules and experience teach that consortia are more likely to have continuing interest in the development of their approved specifications.

It is for that reason that the JTC1 PAS rules specify that PAS submissions each will be governed by negotiated terms of maintenance. The PAS rules require that each submission include its own maintenance terms: this allows negotiation (and JTC1 approval) of the degree to which submitters are capable of remaining involved, or prefer to turn over control. No other system could fulfill the paramount goal of the PAS program: to permit collaboration by cooperative approvals and continuing review in both organizations, *without* forking an implemented work. (That is, the risk of divergent submitter versions and JTC1 versions.)

OASIS followed this procedure. Its 2005 explanatory report submission, unanimously approved by JTC1 vote, unambiguously specifies a method for control over future versions and corrections.

We suggest some possible solutions to practical coordination below. We believe there are entirely satisfactory procedures available, that reasonably will meet the needs of both organizations.

C. Concerns regarding release timing.

It's also inevitable that two organizations with continuing activity may differ in their expectations and rules for processing change requests.

OASIS rules require that work be brought to a significant and stable approval level before being submitted externally, to JTC1 or elsewhere.   The release schedule for official OASIS errata, and subsequent versions, involves public review periods and other formal steps, and does not contemplate updates every few months.

JTC1's own internal errata procedure for home-grown JTC1 documents, often requiring no coordination with stakeholders outside a JTC1 subcommittee, is designed for faster and less consultative publication. The two organizations' methods are designed for different purposes and create different expectations.

SC34's Liaison Statement expresses concern regarding the speed with which the OASIS OpenDocument Technical Committee releases its errata and revision documents.   It is our understanding that these concerns are a re-statement by SC34 of the concerns expressed by a minority of JTC1 members during OASIS' successful application in 2007 for continuation of its PAS status. OASIS responded to those comments in its response to JTC1's notification of renewal of that status (JTC1 N9019), and our views are noted there.

OASIS proposes some specific practical suggestions here, below, to implement in more detail the collaborative approach we proposed at that time.

D. Practical collaborative solutions.

OASIS respectfully submits that the underlying problem faced in our collaboration is a failure of mutually satisfactory synchronization of releases. Some JTC1 stakeholders, who offer comments in good faith, wish to see OASIS respond on the same accelerated schedule that would be applied by JTC1 SC34 to is own internal work.   Instead, the ongoing OASIS TC obeys its rules, and queues them for evaluation and inclusion in larger, less frequent major releases.

OASIS process rules contemplate a broad constituency, and may often impose more lengthy public review, notice and formality steps than an informal maintenance project from a small group of JTC1 subcommittee participants. It may be the case that the submission of formal "OASIS Standards" is the wrong approach way for our TC to interoperate agilely with JTC1's participants, on non-substantive proposed errata and alleged defects.

OASIS still believes the method proposed and approved in 2005 for transmitting major releases from OASIS to JTC1, as approved by JTC1 then, is correct and binding on both parties. However, we suggest that we work with the SC34 leadership to propose to JTC1 and OASIS a less formal maintenance procedure for jointly-maintained lists of errata and defects.

It may be possible to treat such work at a lower level of formality, and with more frequently published updates satisfying to both organizations. (From the OASIS point of view, the OASIS TC likely would be able to give a lower level of approval to errata lists, and share them with SC34 for faster joint publication of mutually agreed errata.)   If this approach seems generally sensible, we will suggest that the OASIS TC and JTC1SC34 leaders confer on a approach to be implemented by the end of 2008. Forging a genuine partnership that works well under two sets of continuing rules requires effort. OASIS is happy to continue to engage in that process.

E. Applicable JTC1 rules.

In spite of the foregoing potential for satisfactory resolution, OASIS also believes it must correct some confusing statements about the JTC1 rules and response obligations that apply to the transposed PAS standard.

Respectfully, OASIS is unaware of JTC rules that permit or encourage a subcommittee to assume control of a PAS submission when the original approval provides otherwise.

(1) The PAS Management Guide, JTC1 N5746, under which OASIS originally jointed as a PAS submitter and submitted OpenDocument Format, provided more narrative than do subsequent JTC1 rule documents.   The Guide was clear that the PAS program existed to facilitate collaboration with ongoing, vital submitters ... who were free to retain the right to edit their own work. Essentially, the Guide asked all PAS submitters to propose maintenance terms, and asked JTC1 to approve (or negotiate, or reject) them. The same sense is found in Section 14.4.2 of the current Directives (JTC1 N7364).

Sections 5.2.5 and 7.3.1 of N5746 directed PAS submitters to indicate the degree and manner in which they propose to work with JTC1, in two types of maintenance: "correction of defects", and "revisions and amendments".   This scheme also is carried forward in the current Directives' Annex M and section M.7.3.1. PAS submitters also are asked to describe in their applications the "degree of openness" to collaboration in defect correction, the manner of cooperation for in proposing and evaluating revisions and amendments, and, importantly, the extent to which the submitter plans to remain active in the future of the submitted work.

These statements obviously are elicited so the JTC1 members can review each submitter's proposed maintenance plans, and then base their transposition votes, and PAS status votes, on the content of those answers.

The old and new JTC1 rules also note that a submitter retains the right to withdraw submissions, and to request in any application that they remain unchanged by JTC1.

(2) SC 34's liaison statement N1095 suggests that under its current rules, SC34 may take over responsibility for ISO/IEC 26300 in a manner that completely breaches the original terms proposed by OASIS and agreed by JTC1.   N1095 cites Clause 14.4.2, paragraph 2 of the current Directives.

Respectfully, the cited provision contradicts the actions approved by JTC1 in 2005. The latest relevant revision to the Directives (Annex M to N7364), enacted and circulated after IS

26300 was submitted (see SC34 N0719), may potentially introduce internal contradiction, by *both* validating negotiation between JTC1 and a PAS submitter regarding maintenance (and withdrawal); but then also making unclear statements about the applicability of the orthogonal routine "Clause 15" procedures used for internally-developed JTC1 documents.

It is difficult to reconcile the alleged acceptance of terms in an explanatory report, on one hand, with the proposed application of the conventional non-PAS Clause 15 maintenance terms, on the other. Suffice to say, we are concerned that a number of existing PAS submissions from independent consortia would have been unlikely to occur, if JTC1 announced that its subcommittees would replace the submitter's future versioning approvals with its own ... because that would prohibit the submitter from having any control over future development of its own work. In that event, PAS (and similar fast-track) methods only would be useful to external organizations who wish to abandon their continuing project.

One key difficulty here, for continuing consortia development efforts, is the effect of a unilateral change on two distinct licensing and intellectual property regimes. It's likely than any PAS submitter will have its own patent, licensing and/or royalty policies, which will not be identical to JTC1's own rules. Thus, there's no immediate guarantee that material gathered from one side will be completely usable by the other .... in which case, unilateral action would break the ability of the two groups to issue parallel work.

Ignoring the negotiated and approved maintenance terms with a PAS submitter would amount to a breach of the original maintenance contract between the PAS submitter and JTC1, made as a condition of the submission. To avoid "forking" and divergence, a primary risk mentioned in the JTC1 rules, a submitter's only other recourse would be to withdraw the work from JTC1.

(3) OASIS complied with the above requirements in its original 2004 Application for PAS status. OASIS' application clearly states that it will retain editorial control over the future subsequent versions of any OASIS submission, so long as OASIS retains an active technical committee in that field; and re-submitting future versions to JTC1 to permit continued alignment during the maintenance phase:

> *"We will submit OASIS Standards with the understanding that the OASIS TC will continue maintenance of the specification; for implementation purposes, it is essential that the specifications approved by JTC 1 remain aligned to the OASIS Standard. Where the OASIS TC is closed or has decided that it is no longer interested in maintenance of the specification, OASIS may submit with permission to JTC1 to modify and maintain the specification if JTC1 so desires. ...*
> *OASIS expects that submitted OASIS Standard[s] be approved as-is, and that any comments or requests for change be submitted to the OASIS TC. The rationale for this policy is to prevent divergence, i.e. to prevent the possibility of there being two versions of the same specification, one from OASIS and one from JTC1, in circulation. ...*
> *The intent of OASIS is, after approval of a OASIS Standard by JTC1, to submit further versions of the same work to JTC1 for approval. Appropriate liaison should be established between the OASIS TC and the applicable JTC1 SC in order to provide adequate lines of communication between the two groups."*

This Application, including those terms specified by OASIS, was approved by JTC1. OASIS conformed again to the PAS requirements of JTC1 in its 2005 submission of its

OpenDocument Format specification. In the Explanatory Report conveying the Submission, OASIS elaborated on its maintenance plans in a clearly stated set of transposition and maintenance terms:

> *"OASIS and its OpenDocument Technical Committee plans to conduct the ongoing maintenance of the submitted specification, including the collection and promulgation of errata, implementation experience and possible feedback towards future improvements. OASIS requests that any corrections of defects or errata from the JTC1 process be re-presented to the OASIS Technical Committee, for handling and correction, which the Technical Committee will be pleased to publish in a manner coordinated with JTC1. OASIS requests that any change or improvement proposals from the JTC1 process be re-presented to the OASIS Technical Committee, for inclusion in a future major revision. The OASIS OpenDocument Technical Committee proposes to remain active and drive growth of the specification, and to bring any future major versions back to JTC1 for re-transposition at an appropriate stage of stability."*

The OpenDocument Format submission, including those terms specified by OASIS, was approved unanimously by JTC1. by a then-extraordinary breadth of voting members.

While OASIS welcomes input from JTC1 and its stakeholders, and has made concrete practical suggestions (above) about faster collaborative approval of errata, OASIS respectfully declines the suggestion of SC34's liaison statement that the agreed terms above can be abandoned.   It is possible that the edited JTC1 Directives published in 2006 require clarification. In the meantime, OASIS plans to continue to seek methods for collaboration with JTC1 and other global standards bodies, in a true cooperative manner, without breach of the transposition and maintenance terms unanimously approved in 2005.

Respectfully submitted,

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