THE REST OF THE NEWS

Every day, we scan the web for all of the news and press releases that relate to standards, and aggregate that content at the News Section of ConsortiumInfo.org. For up to date information, bookmark our News page, or take advantage of our RSS feed: http://www.consortiuminfo.org/news/rss/ Updates are usually posted on Mondays and Wednesdays.

The following are just a few of the many stories from the past month that you can find digested at ConsortiumInfo.org.

New Consortia

There you are! People have been talking about a new GRID consortium being planned for quite some time. This month it finally left stealth mode and announced itself. Companies represented on the Board include EMC, Fujitsu-Siemens, HP, Intel, NEC, Network Appliance, Oracle, and Sun.

Technology Companies Form Enterprise Grid Alliance (EGA) Consortium

The Cover Pages, April 20, 2004 -- A new Enterprise Grid Alliance (EGA) consortium has been formed to develop enterprise grid computing specifications and grid interoperability solutions. EGA working groups will assemble, profile, and create new specifications as needed to encourage and accelerate movement to an open grid environment. EGA members preparing specifications, test cases, or reference implementations will agree to license their essential patents under royalty-free terms. ...Full Story

New Initiatives

Laboring in the Vineyards: The Unicode Consortium doesn't get a lot of press...but it should. The low-profile organization is dealing with the lowest common denominator building blocks that allow human beings to communicate with each other: text characters. Now, they are going a bit farther, and addressing "locale data" issues that will further the goal of allowing everyone to communicate with everyone, and access everything. Even if they come from a remote part of the world, and don't speak a widely known language.

Unicode Consortium Hosts the Common Locale Data Repository (CLDR)

Unicode Press Release, Mountain View, CA, April 21, 2004 -- The Unicode consortium announced sponsorship for the CLDR Project and its Locale Data Markup Language (LDML), designed to facilitate standardized methods for software globalization. The Common Locale Data Repository (CLDR) providesa general XML format for the exchange of locale information for use in application and system software development, combined with a public repository of XML-encoded locale and cultural data (e.g., date, time, currency, collation, text translation and transliteration). ...Full Story

Open Source

Dear Darl: In case there was any doubt about the robustness of the capitalist system, a start-up has just announced that it will underwrite the risk that Darl McBride is right about Linux. Given that the new company (a) says that it has examined the Linux code, and (b) has no stake in whether SCO wins or loses, this is more interesting news than whether large vendors already committed to Linux offer to indemnify their customers.

Insurance group: Linux free of copyright violations

InfoWorld, April 19, 2004 -- A start-up company looking to provide legal insurance against copyright claims against open-source software has declared the Linux kernel free of copyright infringement. Open Source Risk Management LLC (OSRM) on Monday announced that it cannot find any copyright violations in the 2.4 and 2.6 Linux kernels, counter to claims from The SCO Group Inc. SCO is suing IBM Corp. and other Linux users, saying the Linux operating system violates its Unix copyrights. "We are saying that SCO has no copyright claim," said Daniel Egger, founder and chairman of OSRM. "We think they will lose." OSRM also announced it will offer indemnification on legal costs for open-source software, priced at about 3 percent of the desired coverage, for example, $1 million of legal protection for $30,000 a year. ...Full Story

I am GNU, Hear me Roar: While the ongoing SCO offensive has been garnering most of the Linux legal headlines, a little noticed decision in the Munich district court represents a milestone for the open source movement. For the first time, a court has enforced the obligations to share and pass on required licensing obligations under the GNU General Public License.

Munich Court Grants Preliminary Injuction for Infringing Use of GPL Licensed Software

Opensourcelegal.org, Berlin, Germany, April 14, 2004 -- The Munich district court granted a preliminary injunction against Sitecom Germany GmbH (http://www.sitecom.com/). This injunctive relieve has been applied by the netfilter/iptables project (http://www.netfilter.org/). Sitecom is offering a wireless access router product (WL-122) based on software licensed under the GNU General Public License (GPL), developed by the netfilter/iptables project...According to the court order, Sitecom did not fulfill the obligations imposed by the GNU General Public License covering the netfilter/iptables software. In particular, Sitecom did not make any source code offering or include the GPL license terms with their products...."To my knowledge, this is the first case in which a judicial decision has been decreed on the applicability and the validity of the GNU GPL", says Dr. Till Jaeger, part ner of the Berlin and Munich based law firm JBB Rechtsanwaelte (http://www.jbb.de/) that represented the netfilter/iptables project in the litigation. ...Full Story

Never say "never": In another indication that no company is an island, Microsoft published the source code of one of its tools this month. Granted, an installer is hardly an operating system, but it is an acknowledgement that it takes a lot less energy to go with the flow than to constantly swim upstream.

Microsoft Airs Tools' Source Code Online

CNET News.com, April 6, 2004 -- Microsoft published the code for one of its products on an open-source software development Web site late Monday, departing from its hard- line stance against making the underlying components of its technology available to the general public. Microsoft revealed the code for its Windows Installer XML (WiX) software, a set of tools used to build installation packages for the company's Windows products from XML source code. According to the information posted on the SourceForge site, a resource for open-source collaboration projects, the actual code Microsoft published

supports an environment that software developers can use for creating Windows setup packages. ...Full Story

New Standards

Partners in Standards: The following announcement has an obvious, and a less obvious news aspect to it. The obvious element is that OpenGIS is advancing some of its important work through cooperation with ISO, the global standards body. The less obvious element involves the details surrounding how the two will handle the housekeeping aspects of the standard: going forward, the specification will track towards adoption as an ISO standard, while OGC's own ongoing work will be called a "Recommendation Paper." Different standards bodies (e.g., ISO, IEEE, BTU, etc.) all have different ways of addressing the work of other standards organizations, and there is less uniformity in how standards are "shared" than one would expect. This is particularly true when a standard has been generated through a consortium that wishes to maintain an ongoing role in the maintenance of the standard.

Geography Markup Language (GML) Version 3.1 Public Release from Open GIS Consortium

The Cover Pages, March 26, 2004 -- The Open GIS Consortium (OGC) has approved the release of the "OpenGIS Geography Markup Language (GML) Implementation Specification" Version 3.1.0 as a publicly available Open GIS Recommendation Paper, tracked for dual release as ISO 19136. GML defines XML encoding for the transport and storage of geographic information, including both the geometry and properties of geographic features. The release contains a 601-page prose document and 33 XML Schema files. ...Full Story

Accreditation and value propositions: It used to be the case that a major reason to seek accreditation by the nationally recognized body of your host country was the ability to have your standards referred for global adoption. Here is a second important standard that is being adopted by ISO that was developed not in an accredited SDO, but in a consortium.

ISO Approves ebXML OASIS Standards

Oasis-open.org, Geneva, Switzerland and Boston, MA, March 29, 2004 -- The International Standards Organization (IS0) has approved a suite of four ebXML OASIS Standards that enable enterprises in any industry, of any size, anywhere in the world to conduct business over the Internet. The submissions from OASIS will be published as ISO technical specifications, ISO/TS 15000. The new ISO 15000 designation, under the general title, Electronic business eXtensible markup language, includes four parts, each corresponding to one of ebXML's modular suite of standards: ISO 15000-1: ebXML Collaborative Partner Profile Agreement ISO 15000-2: ebXML Messaging Service Specification ISO 15000-3: ebXML Registry Information Model ISO 15000-4: ebXML Registry Services Specification Until now, the technology available for most businesses to exchange data was electronic data interchange (EDI), which made significant contributions to productivity and inventory control. Many companies, however, find EDI expensive and difficult to implement. The ebXML initiative, using the economies of scale presented by the Internet, breaks through these obstacles. ...Full Story

Other New Work Product

RFID in a Nutshell: If you've been reading our ongoing coverage of RFID technology, standards and uptake and don't know much about what RFID is all about, here's a chance to catch up. AIM has put together a CD compendium of everything you need to know to get with the program.

AIM North America Releases the RFID Knowledge Base

AIMglobal.org, Warrendale, Pennsylvania, April 7, 2004 -- AIM North America announces the publication of the "RFID Knowledge Base", an interactive CD containing key educational information about RFID technologies and solutions designed to address informational needs of systems integrators and VARs. The "RFID Knowledge Base" is a compilation of material published in AIM's "RFID Connections" e-newsletter, material contributed by AIM North America member companies, and material from independent sources. The content includes an Introduction to RFID, Case Studies, RFID Basics, Justifying and Implementing RFID, RFID Issues and Insights, and Additional Resources and Related Links. "The Knowledge Base is a comprehensive resource for anyone in need of understanding RFID technology and its application", stated Dan Mullen, President of AIM. "The incredible demand for accurate information about RFID in North America is apparent and AIM is a natural resource for this information." ...Full Story

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A welcome addition: Out of all the verbiage that exists on standards, there is surprisingly little dedicated to the topic of how to actually create them. Happily, ETSI (the European Technical Standards Institute) has decided to put its "Making Better Standards" book available on-line, thus providing a ready reference to all on how to create useful standards. Also happily, the on-line book starts with defining what the market wants and needs, which is a refreshingly pragmatic starting point that is sometimes given less attention than it deserves. While the site is oriented towards writing communications standards (and particularly ETSI standards), it will still provide a useful primer for anyone new to the process side of standards setting.

ETSI puts on record its commitment to making better standards

ETSI.org, Sophia-Antipolis, France, 2nd April, 2004 -- Technical standards play a vital role in ensuring the success of modern communications systems, but can only do so if those standards are 'fit for the purpose.' A new website, launched today by the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), provides an easy-to-use guide to anyone involved in writing (or reading) communications standards to ensure the highest possible quality of their efforts ETSI's Technical Committee on Methods for Testing and Specification (TC-MTS) has produced the web site as a complete overhaul of their immensely successful paper book version of "Making Better Standards"; that was first published in 1996. The guide answers questions about what the market is for standards and the need for standards that are both relevant and timely. It also addresses the structure of the standard and differing methods of validation, from Walkthrough to Prototyping. Some of the topics covered by the web site: Market Expectations; Planning for Standardization; Protocol Standards; Regulatory Environment; Specification Languages; Test Specifications; Validating Standards; What Makes A Standard "Better"; The standard setting site may be found at: http://portal.etsi.org/mbs/ ...Full Story

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Standards and Society

Where there's residue, there may be detectible arson: Standards are not only all around us, but they take diverse forms. Paint chips, in their own way, are a standards tool: specific colors identified by numbers. NIST has just helped create a physical standards tool of its own: a "Standard Reference Material." The liquid will help calibrate law enforcement instrumentation to better enable it to detect residues left behind by 15 common arson accelerants. The hope: to raise the dismal 2% national conviction rate for that crime.

Standard Helps ID Fuels Used in Arson

NIST Tech Beat, March 25, 2004 -- Faced with a growing number of ignitable chemicals with similar characteristics, arson investigators have their hands full trying to tell residues of insecticide, for example,

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from those of gasoline. But identifying fuels used to set fires will be easier now, thanks to some help from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). ...Full Story

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Story Updates

Small pieces, loosely joined: In our last issue of the Consortium Standards Bulletin, we noted the increasing fragmentation of standard setting methods and results. See: The Balkanization of Standard Setting. OASIS, the multifaceted standard setting organization that the world looks to advance the state of the art and broaden the reach of XML, has just held a symposium to be sure that there are no gaps left behind as multiple consortia and unofficial coalitions of individual companies continue to rush pell-mell into the future, each adding one piece to the chaotic puzzle at a time.

OASIS to Host Open Symposium on Reliable Infrastructures for XML

Oasis-open.org, Boston, MA, 8 April, 2004 -- OASIS, the international standards consortium, announced plans to host the Symposium on Reliable Infrastructures for XML, 26-27 April 2004, in New Orleans. The event, which will be open to the public, will offer a forum for the international community to exchange ideas and present results of standards work-in-progress. Attendees will identify unaddressed topics in need of standards development and areas where coordination between efforts would promote interoperability. "Today, many different (and partially interchangeable) technologies are available that propose to increase the reliability of XML-based messaging and networking infrastructure… The OASIS Symposium will focus on exploring the current state of these technologies and identifying gaps where open standards are needed." For more information see: http://xml.coverpages.org/ni2004-04-08-b.html ...Full Story

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More "Private Specifications": In the March issue of the Consortium Standards Bulletin we reviewed the fragmentation of standardization efforts, including the burgeoning trend of groups of companies that create draft specifications, and then submit them to standards bodies for formal adoption -- and indeed sometimes skip that last step entirely. (See the editorial, The Balkanization of Standard Setting and following story) The following article in eWeek reports on the announcement of the latest such specifications, and the market's reaction to the technique.

Microsoft, Others Publish Metadata-Exchange Standard

eWeek, March 31, 2004 -- Microsoft, IBM, BEA Systems Inc. and SAP AG on have announced the publication of the WS-MetadataExchange specification. In addition, Microsoft, IBM and BEA announced an update to the WS-Addressing specification. Both are part of an existing Web services architecture laid out by Microsoft. Eric Newcomer (IONA Technologies) said: "We are very interested in seeing these private specifications progress toward standardization in open forums, as the specification owners have promised. And we are happy to participate in the feedback sessions they hold toward that end. However, we find ourselves in a very difficult situation with regard to implementing specifications such as these in our Artix product line, since we cannot be sure what direction they will take in the future." ...Full Story

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What a Long, Strange Trip it's Been: PKI certificates: a way to etablish secure email com-munications through "Public Key Infrastructure" -- is a standards-based approach using digital certificates that has been around for a long time. Originally, there was an independent consortium created to foster the approach, which later merged into OASIS. After languishing on the side lines for some time, the PKI TC in OASIS is suggesting that its time to move for widespread adoption of PKI technology, and is also laying out a roadmap for how that can be done. At the same time, they are

Action Plan Developed for PKI Adoption

ComputerWorld, March 25, 2004 -- An e-business standards watchdog last month unveiled a comprehensive action plan aimed at kickstarting the adoption of Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) technology.... Security vendors have long touted PKI technology (which uses digital certificates to authenticate e-mail, individual and enterprise transactions) as the answer to most network computer problems. But it has been hampered by cumbersome imple-mentation, differing and incompatible standards along with issues of legacy system integration. PKI has evolved and so too should the industry's understanding of the technology and its ability to drive Web services and e-business,... The PKI Action Plan addresses some of the primary obstacles to widespread PKI adoption; these adoption barriers include: poor or missing support in software applications, high costs, poor understanding of PKI among senior managers and end users, interoperability problems and lack of focus on business needs. ...Full Story

DOD to Vendors: Join PKI System or Take a Hike

Government Computer News, March 22, 2004 -- If vendors don't register by April 1 2004 for encryption certificates to do business with the Defense Department, DOD intends to severely limit their ability to work on contracts. DOD plans to enforce a requirement that DOD contractors participate in the Interim External Certification Authority program. IECA requires DOD contractors to have one-year encrypted digital certificates to ensure the security of vendor communications with the department. Roughly 350,000 contractors that are doing business with the department need certificates,...The directive requires the "exchange of unclassified information with vendors and contractors" be conducted using public-key infrastructure certificates obtained from approved certificate authorities. ...Full Story

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What's Up/What's Down

Web Inventor Berners-Lee Wins Technology Award

Washingtonpost.com, Helsinki, Finland, April 15, 2004 -- World Wide Web inventor Tim Berners-Lee won one million euros ($1.23 million) on Thursday, the largest single amount of money he has made from an invention that has made many others very rich. Berners-Lee, 48, was named the first winner of the world's largest technology award -- the Millennium Technology Prize -- by the Finnish Technology Award Foundation at a ceremony in the Finnish city of Espoo. Berners-Lee launched the World Wide Web in 1991 and gave the world easy access to information, revolutionizing the way it worked and communicated. ...Full Story

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Who's Doing What to Whom

__But we still need to talk about that "hairball" remark:__ What, you may ask, does the new rapprochement between historic enemies Sun and Microsoft mean for standards? While Sun CEO Scott McNealy may no longer refer to the Windows OS as a "welded shut hairball", he has proclaimed Sun's continuing dedication to open standards. In the following article, Stephen Shankland tries to peel a few layers off of the standards onion, quoting analysts and players as regards specific technology areas, and the impact that the Sun/MS settlement may have on the related standards.

Sun says Microsoft pact not a blow to standards

CNET News.com, April 6, 2004 -- Sun has been one of the most vocal advocates of open standards, arguing that customers should be able to choose from technology from multiple suppliers and shouldn't have to fear getting locked in to any one company's technology. The rhetoric has been designed to undermine Microsoft, whose software has long been derided by Sun Chief Executive Scott McNealy as a "welded-shut hair ball." ...Full Story