GESMER UPDEGROVE LLP
Attorneys at Law

Consortium Standards Bulletin

*A **ConsortiumInfo.org** publication*

January 2003
Vol II, No. 1

STANDARDS EVOLUTION

Editorial: **Technology, Standards and Evolution**

Few things change as fast as the world of technology, so why should the standards world be any different? This editorial, and the stories that follow, highlight the way in which standard setting mirrors, keeps pace with, and in turn influences the evolution of technology.

Featured Story: **Oasis: Ten Years After**

Can a standard setting consortium stay useful and relevant for ten years? In the case of OASIS, the answer is "yes" - but its founders would never recognize it now. Today, everything from its name to its structure has changed, on the way to becoming one of the important organizations in the global standard setting infrastructure.

Trends: **Wireless (Who's On First?)**

The press has made much of the competition of BlueTooth and Wi-Fi for the hearts and minds of the industry. Are competing standards good or bad?

News Shorts: Consortia respond to the war on terrorism with new standards; Wi-Fi competes with BlueTooth (and itself) while HomeRF throws in the towel; the quest for universal identifiers continues; and much more

Consortium Standards Bulletin is a free monthly electronic Journal sponsored by the Boston law firm of Gesmer Updegrove LLP. The current issue of the ***CSB*** and a subscription form may be found at www.consortiuminfo.org/bulletins. Questions or comments about these articles, the ***CSB*** or ConsortiumInfo.org may be directed to Andrew Updegrove at updegrove@consortiuminfo.org.

EDITORIAL

TECHNOLOGY, STANDARDS AND EVOLUTION

Andrew Updegrove

The truism that the only constant is change could scarcely be more applicable than in the world of technology. Of course, change can give rise to as many commercial risks as it does opportunities, for both vendors and consumers alike. Happily, the burgeoning of the consortium movement over the past 16 years, as well as the continuing efforts of the formal standards bodies, have increasingly served to weight the balance towards opportunity, and away from risk.

This issue of the Consortium Standards Bulletin is about evolution - evolution on the part of technology, and evolution on the part of the standards infrastructure that supports the emergence and establishment of new technologies. While the evolution of technology is obsessively addressed by the press, the responsive changes in the standards community receive far less attention. And yet, without concomitant evolution on the part of standard setting and the organizations that support technology, the world of commercial products and services would suffer.

One aspect of the process of evolution is the existence of cycles. In the Trends section of the last issue of the ***CSB***, we noted the increasing prevalence of mergers in the consortium world. Mergers can be the result of pure economic pressures, but they can also result from evolutionary dynamics. For example, Web services are still in the ascendant, hype phase of their commercial introduction. Not surprisingly, they are the source of a number of new consortium efforts, both within existing organizations as well as through newly launched, independent organizations, such as the Web Services Initiative (http://www.ws-i.org/). As time goes on, it is likely that consolidation will set in, as it has in the mobile wireless area. Mobile wireless, of course, was itself a hot topic a few years ago, and (predictably) a number of associations were formed in the early days of that industry. In the second half of 2002, many of these same organizations consolidated into one - the Open Mobile Alliance (http://www.consortiuminfo.org/links/oma2.shtml)

The Trends section of this issue addresses the next step in the standards evolutionary cycle - the one in which one standard will usually prevail over another, if they both address a single niche. Today, Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN) technology is at this stage of the cycle. In our examination below, we point out the important differences between today's world and yesterday's, contrasting the battle between the VHS and Betamax formats with the current jockeying between the BlueTooth and Wi-Fi standards. Twenty-seven years ago, video purchasers were trapped in a contest between proprietary technologies, while today's laptop owners will be buying cards based on competing standards that are each supported by a consortium or SDO process. We predict that the outcome will be more beneficial to vendors and end users alike in consequence.

The last way station in the standards cycle is the maintenance stage. Our lead article in this issue reviews the ten-year history of OASIS - the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Systems. OASIS has evolved from its early role as a single purpose entity fostering the adoption of SGML to an organization which today has hundreds of institutional members, a staff of 12, and over 45 supported initiatives. Its mission is broad, yet focused, and many organizations have turned to OASIS to find a home for their continuing work.

In the News Shorts section of this issue, we include not only a number of stories about the wireless world, but also several press releases that demonstrate how quickly the standards world responds to the crises of the non-technological world - by launching initiatives to enable diverse governmental units to manage emergency situations (LINK: OGC Critical Infrastructure Protection Initiative enters Phase 2), and to develop a universal global framework for supporting rapid discovery and sharing of suspected criminal and terrorist evidence by law enforcement agencies (LINK: OASIS Members to Create Framework for Global Sharing of Criminal and Terrorist Evidence). Both of these standards efforts have been launched by existing, experienced, broadly representative consortia. Rarely is it recognized that the standards infrastructure of America is, in its own way, vital to the country's defense.

This issue of the ***CSB*** can only hint at the ongoing dynamism that has exemplified the evolution of the standard setting process in the last ten years, and the organizations that carry out that important work. Where a short time ago there were only a handful of official, "de jure" standard setting organizations, today there are worldwide processes, carried out through such bodies as the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), which support the continuing development of the World Wide Web and the Internet. These organizations sprang into being independent of both the traditional de jure standards bodies, as well as national sponsorship. Similarly, there is now a burgeoning Open Source community, which is providing a new avenue to interoperability.

Within the landscape so described, there are dramatic changes in influence and empowerment as well. Individuals as well as companies can now affect technical outcomes on the 'Web and in the Open Source movement. Constituencies can form and create new initiatives rapidly, or find an increasing number of established organizations to which they can bring their proposals. The rules and the influence are changing, and the ramifications may well be far-reaching. It would be wise to pay attention, as this evolution continues to unfold.

Comments? updegrove@consortiuminfo.org

FEATURED STORY

OASIS: TEN YEARS AFTER

Andrew Updegrove

It would be difficult to establish the exact number of technical standard setting consortia that have come and gone in the last ten years, but their numbers would be in the hundreds. Indeed, the more than 200 such organizations that are in existence today demonstrate a wide range of vitality, from energetic to moribund. Were one to scan the websites of a sampling of these bodies, most would cite a date of formation within the last five years, and few would show more than a trickle of announcements in their press rooms, each relating to a narrow technical focus.

In marked contrast, a review of the website of OASIS (the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards) would reveal that it is in its 11th year of existence, that it is constantly announcing the release of finished specifications and the launching of new processes, and that it has active initiatives in areas as diverse as biometrics, e-Government, and Web Services - more than 45 hosted initiatives in all.

A more in-depth review of the structure and activities of OASIS would uncover a number of other aspects that are strikingly different than can be found in other organizations. These include a number of formerly independent consortia that have merged into OASIS, and still continue to enjoy a semi-independent existence. Rather than being forced to merge into the existing committee structure of OASIS, these organizations now enjoy the best of both worlds - the services of the OASIS infrastructure and staff and the involvement of other OASIS members, as well as the continuation of their own technical agenda, websites, and process. Three such combinations have occurred in the last 12 months alone, with the LegalXML, UDDI and PKI Forum initiatives all opting to move in under the OASIS virtual roof.

As of this writing, the OASIS community includes seven websites, five of them supporting individual technical initiatives (www.cgmopen.org, www.xml.org, www.ebxml.org, www.pkiforum.org and www.uddi.org), one serving the entire OASIS community (www.oasis-open.org), and a seventh - "Cover Pages" (http://xml.coverpages.org/) - which OASIS provides "as a public resource to document and encourage the use of open standards that enhance the intelligibility, quality and longevity of digital information."

In short, OASIS is one of a small number of consortia that have achieved a permanence and reputation which few standard setting initiatives aspire to or attain. As is often the case, the path from formation to current instantiation has been no more straight than the course of technological evolution over the same time period.

Origins and Transition. OASIS was formed in 1993 as SGML Open, an international consortium of suppliers with products and services that supported the Standard Generalized Markup Language (ISO 8879). During its first five years, SGML Open sought to expand the market for SGML by driving demand through marketing and education, and enhancing interoperability (the latter by developing and building consensus for technical resolutions that could make SGML adoption faster, easier, and less expensive). For five years, that mission remained relevant, and OASIS operated as a typical technical initiative focused on a single business goal.

With the advent of XML (a streamlined, web-enabled application of SGML), however, the entire landscape of the marketplace began to change. At this point in the road, a consortium is typically faced with a number of alternatives, none of which is particularly attractive. It can declare victory (or defeat) and disband, it can struggle along while its membership declines, or it can determine whether there is an evolutionary path which would allow it to remain relevant and useful.

While consortia should know when to close the book on their existence, it is also true that the energy and cost of launching them is not insignificant. Accordingly, when a business/technological need evolves rather than disappears, it can make good sense for a consortium to evolve with the marketplace. OASIS

accordingly opted to take the third path, but prudently decided to look farther down the road than a simple transition from promoting SGML adoption to promoting XML adoption. Instead, the organization decided to expand its scope so that it would not, once again, become tied to a single, "latest and greatest" technology, and focus on the greater business need that it had been created to serve. In harmony with this strategic decision, the organization adopted the name OASIS in 1998 - the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards.

The rapid acceptance that XML enjoyed in the marketplace also meant that there was less call for an organization dedicated to promotional and educational activities. As a result, OASIS turned its attention increasingly to the second leg of its historical mission: developing interoperability specifications to enable the application of standards, and particularly XML. In 2000, it revamped its technical process by introducing a new system tailored to favor openness and democracy over centralized control. The new process allowed members to more readily set the technical agenda for the Consortium based on their perception of the needs of the marketplace.

A Process of Ongoing Evolution. Having made the conversion from a single, language standard-centric focus to a mission that concerns itself with broader industry needs, OASIS embarked consciously on a path of ongoing evolution and recreation. With that freedom of outlook, it has come to view its mission as driving the global development, convergence and adoption of e-business standards. Along the way, it has become recognized as one of the important industry consortia that are leading the industry to adopt new ways of doing business, such as Web services.

The openness with which OASIS considers supporting new initiatives has played an important role in attracting "not invented here" processes to its banner, and the times have been propitious for bringing partners to its door. Over the past several years, XML and (more recently) Web services have spawned a plethora of independent trade organizations dedicated to developing domain-specific XML vocabularies and specifications. Other vendor-driven organizations have been formed to bring horizontal solutions to market quickly. With the protracted technology market economic slump, many of these initiatives have struggled to maintain their memberships, and suffered from lack of resources.

At the same time, the contrasting advantages of established organizations with full time staffs, international recognition and well-developed technical infrastructures have become increasingly obvious. Finally, there is an increasing sense in the industry that there are "too many consortia," each requiring its members to pay dues and fund travel expenses for member representatives, and raising concerns about the overall coherence of the standards produced by disparate organizations, all cohabitating in the same overall business area.

In response to this reality, OASIS introduced an innovative way to address the problems that these smaller, independent organizations were facing - a Member Section program that provides a way for groups to maintain a distinct identity while gaining access to OASIS infrastructure, global representation, resources, and expertise. Each Member Section is governed by its own Steering Committee, which reports directly to the OASIS Board of Directors. Participants in OASIS Member Sections are full OASIS members, and any OASIS member may contribute to the work of any Member Section. While a degree of independence in procedure is permitted to Member Sections, each operates under the overall OASIS Technical Committee Process. The result is a level of confidence in the industry in the resulting specifications, as well as a greater degree of both compatibility and coherence among more standards than would exist if each had been promulgated by a totally independent organization.

Going forward, OASIS remains open to combinations with additional independent organizations that are working towards the development, convergence and/or adoption of e-business standards. The organizations with which it combines may represent not only specific technologies and topic areas, but perhaps finite geographic regions as well.

OASIS looks back on a number of other recent, evolutionary challenges which it has successfully met: an increase in both membership (50%) and technical activity (+100%) in 2002, despite the dismal technology sector economy; the growth of its public sector activities, which now account for 30 % of all OASIS work; its success in bringing industry-specific standards development organizations together on broad, universal projects such as ebXML and UBL; and major contributions in the areas of Web services (UDDI,

WSRP, WSIA, Management Protocol, and others) and security (SAML, WS-Security, XACML, PKI, and others).

While undergoing the transformations of the last ten years, the composition of the OASIS membership (not surprisingly) evolved as well. The software developers that originally comprised the bulk of its following gave way to a more diverse mix of members, first with larger vendors and end users joining. Later, national and local government agencies and entities, academic institutions and industry groups became members. The consortium's geographic influence spread as well, from an initial foundation made up principally of North American and European members to one that includes broad participation from Asia and Australia as well.

New Initiatives. In addition to the ongoing process of launching new specifications working groups, OASIS has other plans that are intended to augment the effectiveness of specifications and standards in a broader context. As part of its commitment to develop interoperable, non-duplicative specifications, it has joined with other standards development organizations in the ***Standards Registry Committee*** (SRC), which develops metadata for standards work to describe member organizations' efforts, status and inter-relationships. Independently, OASIS will be building a registry of standards work, using the SRC format metadata to record the status of its own technical activities. The resulting resource will allow any interested party to view what OASIS is developing, as well as how each of its technical activities relates to the work of other organizations. After populating its new registry with its own data, OASIS plans to welcome the metadata of other standards groups, and encourage interoperation with the standards registries that other such groups they themselves create.

In a logically related initiative, the OASIS standards registry will also store a glossary of technical standards terms, in an effort to reduce the confusion in the marketplace among standards developers and implementers over the terminology used in the myriad specifications that are released globally every year. Currently the same term may be used in different ways in different specifications, impeding adoption and implementation. By storing the terminology and shared glossaries in a single location, participants of all organizations will have access to a central source of definitions, allowing language use to become more consistent, and enabling implementers to more readily understand specifications.

The Role of OASIS in the Global Standards Infrastructure. OASIS has sought to design and implement a technical process that enables it to develop and approve specifications much faster than traditional, centrally controlled standards organizations. At the same time, the openness of the OASIS policy encourages a broad range of input (from end-users, governments and technologists) during specification development, resulting in high quality specifications that gain faster and more widespread adoption and implementation. As a result, it has sought to position itself midway along the spectrum of standard setting organizations: nimble, but not closed to the opinions of anyone beyond its paid membership.

As is the case with most standard setting organizations, OASIS maintains liaison relationships with many other groups. At the same time, it enjoys more formal relationships with a number of the internationally recognized "de jure" standard setting organizations, as well as the credibility which recognition by these organizations conveys. These relationships include:

- ***a Memorandum of Understanding on Electronic Business*** with the four formal international standards development organizations - the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE).
- ***co-sponsorship of ebXML with UN/CEFACT, the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business*** (ebXML is a modular suite of specifications that enables enterprises of any size and in any geographical location to conduct business over the Internet).
- ***Class A Liaison membership of ISO TC154, ISO/IEC JTC1 SCER and SC6.***
- ***recognition as an A.4 and A.5 Contributor by ITU-T.***

Looking Forward. OASIS is better positioned than many consortia to meet the challenges of the future, given its recent strong growth and the length of time that its leaders have been associated with the organization (combined, its four senior managers have over 20 years history with the organization).

Nevertheless, as it looks forward to its next ten years, OASIS does not have far to look to see new challenges. It identifies the following as near term issues: supporting the rapid growth of a burgeoning technical agenda; balancing the needs of disparate constituencies (technologists, end-users and governments) in a positive environment where different views can be heard and respected; and supporting a multi-lingual global community.

When asked about the interplay between OASIS' mission and the burgeoning Open Source movement, the response of Carol Geyer, the OASIS Director of Communications, was intriguing: "Currently we do not see the advent of Open Source software impacting our activities. If anything, it is the broad adoption of OASIS work (e.g., ebXML, SAML, etc.) which drives new Open Source software development." OASIS does recognize a growing concern over intellectual property policies and how they affect the entire standards development community. Currently, the OASIS IPR policy takes a flexible approach, allowing the adoption of specifications that do, as well as specifications which do not, require the payment of royalties to implement (all specifications must otherwise be available on reasonable and non-discriminatory terms).

In a departure from the technical language of standard setting, Geyer summarizes part of the philosophy underlying the successful evolution of OASIS: "There is strong precedent supporting our structure as the right means to meet the needs of the marketplace. Throughout history, humans have strived for unity in economic affairs while still seeking to retain local autonomy (language, culture, etc.). By enabling groups to come together in an organic fashion to address universal challenges while preserving local control of their own accomplishments, OASIS creates a global environment that empowers individuals to work openly to advance the common good for mutual benefit." With an outlook that seeks to appeal to human nature rather than work against it, OASIS seems well poised to serve its industry for another ten years.

Comments? updegrove@consortiuminfo.org

OASIS At a Glance:

Date of formation	1993
Number of current members	More than 2,000 participants representing over 300+ member companies, plus individuals
Number of classes of membership	Three - Sponsors, Contributors and Individuals (including a special category for non-profit groups, academic and local government agencies)
Number of countries represented by current members	Over 100
Number of hosted initiatives	More than 45
Number of issued standards or specifications:	OASIS Open Standards (those that have been approved by the OASIS membership at-large) include: ebXML CPPA V 2.0ebXML MSG V 2.0ebXML RIM V 2.0ebXML RS V 2.0DocBook V 4.1DSML V 2.0SAML V 1.0
Supported websites:	http://www.oasis-open.orghttp://www.xml.org http://xml.coverpages.org http://www.ebxml.org http://www.legalxml.org http://www.uddi.org http://www.cgmopen.org

Companies currently represented on the OASIS board	BEA Systems Intel Corporation Hewlett Packard Microsoft Sun Microsystems The Federal Reserve System IBM Corporation
President and CEO	Patrick Gannon
Vice President	Karl Best
Director of Communications	Carol Geyer
Director of Membership	Scott McGrath
Total staff	12

TRENDS

WIRELESS (WHO'S ON FIRST?)

Andrew Updegrove

How hard can it be for the technology industry to agree on a way to let you throw your computer cables away? The answer, as anyone who knows what the names "BlueTooth" and "Wi-Fi" mean, is "Plenty." Scores of companies have invested millions of dollars, years of development efforts, and vast promotional energy into creating the wireless standards that bear these names, and in trying to convince the world that one or the other is the one true path to wireless local area network (WLAN) nirvana.

The more intriguing questions, however, are: "Does it have to be like this?" and "Does anyone benefit from competition among overlapping technical solutions?" In days gone by, the answers usually would have been "Yes" to the first, and "No" to the second. Today, the answer to the first question may still be "Yes," but with the advent of Open Standards, the answer to the second is more likely to be "Yes" as well.

For those who may still have only a fuzzy idea what BlueTooth and Wi-Fi relate to, the following may serve as a brief introduction. Both terms relate to technical design specifications that are intended to allow computers to communicate with other computers and peripheral equipment without connecting cables. Each permits wireless communication over a comparatively short distance (about 30 feet, in the case of Bluetooth, and up to 300 feet, in the case of Wi-Fi - but repeaters can extend the wireless reach of both). Each seeks to adequately address security issues. Each is commercially available (although to varying degrees). And each can be used (at least, according to their more ardent supporters) in many of the same basic situations. One might ask "so what?" until one recalls the names of two other, once competing standards: VHS and Betamax. For while those two video formats battled for supremacy, everyone in the value chain (end users, movie distributors, video rental shops, and so on) suffered from the costs, uncertainly and inconvenience of a dual standard industry.

The fact of the matter is that for many intents and purposes, the marketplace is worse off, and not better off, having two different standards - at least, if that condition persists during the process of widespread commercial adoption. Consider this: an employer today can elect to deploy equipment built to the BlueTooth standard throughout an office environment with favorable results. But with the continuing success of Wi-Fi supporters in boosting the rapid growth of Wi-Fi based "Hot Spots," how will a worker hunkered down at a Starbucks connect to the office network, unless her laptop has been equipped (at extra cost) to handle a Wi-Fi signal as well?

As if this were not bad enough, there are more than two standards to choose among, and the situation in some respects seems to be going sideways. True, the HomeRF standard (yet a third WLAN standard contender) has fallen by the wayside (see: HomeRF Working Group Disbands, below). But at the same

time, the Wi-Fi camp itself has produced multiple standards, some of which (rather incredibly) are not compatible with each other (see Market Uncertain Whether to Embrace 802.11a Wi-Fi Standard).

How we came to this pass is instructive, as is a comparison to what the industry endured before the VHS format vanquished the competing Betamax standard. Equally instructive, however, are the differences, because the standards world has evolved markedly from 1975 - the year in which Sony announced Betamax, offering it to the industry as a proprietary "de facto" standard. To this day, the Betamax format is still widely regarded as the better technology - and yet it was the Betamax solution that disappeared from the marketplace. Many consumers with long memories still regret the money they spent on a Betamax-based machine that ultimately proved to be worthless. Has anything changed which will help avoid the same fate for wireless?

Happily, the answer is "yes,'" in large part because of the intervening rise of open standards. A quarter century ago, the concept of offering valuable technology without royalties as the basis for an open standard was as unheard of as would an announcement today by Microsoft that it would give the Windows source code to a standards consortium. True, Sony offered to license manufacturing rights to its Betamax technology to many companies in the 1970s (including JVC, which one year later released its first video recorder based on its own, ultimately victorious VHS format). But both Sony and JVC were seeking to reap the huge royalty income that the predominant format would command, and each was willing to pour huge sums into the battle in an effort to emerge victorious.

In contrast, BlueTooth and Wi-Fi have had far different origins. In the case of the more entertainingly named BlueTooth (the standard recalls Harald BlueTooth, a Danish king who united the Scandinavian countries in the tenth century), the technology was contributed by Ericsson, its owner, to a consortium of nine "promoter" companies which included its largest competitors (the eight companies, besides Ericsson, were Nokia, Motorola, Toshiba, 3Com, IBM, Intel, Lucent and Microsoft). Why? Because early on, Ericsson realized that unless its competitors adopted the standard, Ericsson itself would be unlikely to reap any benefit from its new technology. If its competitors also adopted BlueTooth, then Ericsson could open a new product market, and make a safe strategic decision in building products to the BlueTooth standard. Or so they hoped.

Given the size of the prize, however, others were soon at work on short range wireless standards based on other technology, including what came to be known as 802.11b, or, in the popular press, the more easily remembered "Wi-Fi." Wi-Fi is even more "open" than BlueTooth, in a sense, as it is under the control of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) process, along with a series of related standards (802.11a and 802.11g) and supporting specifications (e.g., 802.1x, which is designed to enhance WLAN security). In the last six months, Wi-Fi has made huge progress in penetrating the consumer's consciousness, with many 2002 holiday ads for home servers touting their Wi-Fi compliance. The drumbeat of endorsement has continued into the New Year, with well-known consumer chains (like Starbucks) installing Wi-Fi service to attract and hold customers. Additionally, Wi-Fi enjoys the support of a second consortium - the Wi-Fi Alliance (http://www.wi-fialliance.com/OpenSection/index.asp), which certifies product compliance with Wi-Fi standards, and recently announced a branding program to certify that participating Wi-Fi "Hot Spots" meet high standards (see: Wi-Fi "Hot Spot" Seal of Approval Program Launched to Identify Compliant Sites).

But notwithstanding these promotional efforts, the outcome is likely to be better for today's wireless consumers than their hapless, Betamax purchasing parents. The crucial difference is the open ownership of the technology that underlies each of the standards. Because that technology is available to all, there is no reason why companies cannot evaluate and drive the further development of each standard to the maximum extent - and indeed, that is exactly what is occurring. Further, the same companies can ensure that each standard can be deployed in a way that makes it most practical and economical for devices based on each standard to be combined in the same systems. It also means that it may be politically easier for each standard to be tailored for those applications for which it is most suited.

The ability of every company to be involved in each standard at a modest cost also means that no company needs to presumptively work for the success of one standard, and against the success of the other, since it can remain up to speed and in the picture as to the prospects of each process, and make its own strategic decisions in real time, based on full knowledge.

Finally, it is more likely that the "best" technology will win, than was the case with the video format wars. Of course, competition and the quest for commercial advantage will drive the final implementation decisions of every player. And, it would be naive and misleading to suggest that camps of companies do not form around competing standards, seeking to gain commercial advantage by backing the right technical horse. But with many companies controlling the outcome, rather than a single proprietary technology owner, it is less likely that quality will need to take a back seat to competitive positioning.

As of this writing, there are some analysts who find it quite likely that each standard will find a home in the industry, with each addressing somewhat different needs. Indeed, our imaginary road warrior refueling at the local Starbucks today can carry an Apple laptop which is dual-enabled out of the box, and take that capability for granted - as well as the open standards process that helped lead to that result.

Comments? updegrove@consortiuminfo.org

NEWS SHORTS

New Initiatives

OASIS Members to Create Framework for Global Sharing of Criminal and Terrorist Evidence; XML Specification Will Deliver Reliable Authentication and Auditing to Safeguard Privacy and Increase Effectiveness of Lawful Intercepts

Boston, MA, USA: 23 January 2003 - The OASIS standards consortium today announced the formation of a new technical committee to develop a universal global framework for supporting rapid discovery and sharing of suspected criminal and terrorist evidence by law enforcement agencies.: The OASIS LegalXML Lawful Intercept XML (LI-XML) Technical Committee was formed to meet critical needs emerging from several national and intergovernmental mandates around the world, including the recently passed United States Homeland Security Information Sharing Act of 2002, the new Lawful Intercept additional protocol of the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, and e-Government mandates in Europe and the United States.

For the full press release, see: http://www.oasis-open.org/news/oasis_news_01_23_03.shtml

W3C Launches Timed Text Working Group

Cambridge, MA, USA: 17 January 2003: W3C announced the creation of the Timed Text Working Group (TTWG) within the SYMM (Synchronized Multimedia) Activity. The TTWG is chartered to develop an XML based format used to represent streamable text synchronized with timed media like audio or video. The Timed-Text specification is intended to cover all necessary aspects of timed text on the Web. Typical applications of timed text are the real time subtitling of foreign-language movies on the Web, captioning for people lacking audio devices or having hearing impairments, karaoke, scrolling news items or teleprompter applications. Currently, Today, there are a number of incompatible formats for captioning, subtitling and other forms of timed text used on the Web.

To read the full story, see: http://www.w3c.org/AudioVideo/TT/

For a third party article on this release, see: http://news.com.com/2100-1023-981491.html

OGC Critical Infrastructure Protection Initiative enters Phase 2

Wayland, MA, USA, January 9, 2003 - In furtherance of its effort to enable government and industry to work together to manage emergency situations, the Open GIS Consortium (OGC) announced that Phase 2 of its Critical Infrastructure Protection Initiative (CIPI-2) has begun. The CIPI aims to test the application of interoperable technology to help national, state, provincial, and other local governments, commercial, and non-government organizations better manage emergency situations. The initiative does this by coordinating geospatial data and services to meet critical infrastructure protection needs. The Geography Division of the U.S. Census Bureau is sponsoring CIPI-2 and will use OGC's rapid-prototyping process to develop two prototype systems: an online system to update governmental unit boundary information for existing incorporated places, and a system based on OpenGIS Specifications for serving Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (TIGER®) data. The interest of government in the initiative underscores the increasingly critical role of geospatial information in both local as well as national emergency response situations.

For the full press release, see:
http://www.opengis.org/pressrm/pressrelease/20030115_CIPI_SPONSOR_PR.htm

New Standards

Cable, TV Makers Agree on US Digital Standard

Washington, D.C., December 20, 2002 - In an announcement which received little press attention, Comcast Corp., Mitsubishi Electric Corp. and a variety of other cable and electronics manufacturers disclosed that they had reached agreement on a new digital standard which would allow most purchasers of a compliant television to avoid purchasing a set top box from their US cable provider. The accord follows lengthy discussions between cable companies and electronics manufacturers, and results partially from US governmental pressure to finally launch digital television, in order to free up more bandwidth for wireless services. The 21 companies that have already agreed to the standard have petitioned the FTC to make the standard mandatory on all involved industry participants.

This article, copyrighted by the NY Times, cites a Bloomsberg News source. It is available at:
http://digitalmass.boston.com/news/2002/12/20/digital_standard.html

OASIS Members Launch Effort to Establish Common Identification Scheme for Distributed Directory Services

Boston, MA, USA; 8 January 2003 - In an effort to provided "URLs for everything" -- data, systems, organizations, services, and people -- the OASIS standards body announced an effort to address a key challenge in distributed directory services and data sharing--establishing a common identification scheme that can be used across all domains, applications, and transport protocols. The OASIS Extensible Resource Identifier (XRI) Technical Committee will define a Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) scheme and a corresponding Uniform Resource (URN) namespace that meet these requirements, as well as basic mechanisms for resolving XRIs and exchanging data and metadata associated with XRI-identified resources. The work will be based on the Extensible Name Service (XNS), which will be contributed to OASIS by the XNS Public Trust Organization (XNSORG). This contribution represents a continuation of a trend of organizations turning to OASIS to help further their own missions.

For the full press release, see: http://www.oasis-open.org/news/oasis_news_01_08_03.shtml

For a third party article on this release, see: http://www.internetnews.com/dev-news/article.php/1566101

PICMG Adopts AdvancedTCA Specification

WAKEFIELD, Mass., Jan. 7, 2003 - While standards for software and Internet applications garner most of the attention of the technical press, standards efforts remain equally important in the world of tangible products. Recently, the 600 member PCI Industrial Computer Manufacturers Group (PICMG) adopted Revision 1.0 of PICMG 3.0, the base specification for its new AdvancedTCA family of specifications. The Advanced Telecom Computing Architecture is the first open industry specification for carrier grade equipment incorporating high speed switched fabric technology, allowing compliant systems to switch and process 2.5 terabits per second in a single shelf. The specification development effort involved contributions from over 100 companies, and more than 11,000 person-hours of meetings and calls.

For the full press release, see: http://www.picmg.org/news.stm#pr010703

What's Up/What's Down

Market Uncertain Whether to Embrace 802.11a Wi-Fi Standard

CNET News.com, January 8, 2003 - The alphabetic confusion and competition among available Wi-Fi standards continues, as Apple Computer announced that it would not build products to the new (and faster) 802.11a flavor of the successful 802.11b wireless network standard. The issue is the hardware cost of upgrading modems and access points, since the two standards are incompatible. An alternative, 802.11g, however, provides equally fast transmission speeds without requiring modem upgrades. While Apple has announced that it will not implement 802.11a, some other vendors are opting for "dual" use products, which would be usable in both 802.11a as well as 802.11b environments.

For the full story, see: http://news.com.com/2100-1033-979748.html?tag=cd_mh

United Linux to Deliver Enhanced Linux Platform for Telecommunications Carriers

WAKEFIELD, Mass., January 16, 2003 - In a further example of how the Linux platform is becoming appropriate for a broader and broader range of commercial purposes, UnitedLinux today announced plans to make its commercial Linux product available to telecommunications carriers. Under the initiative announced by the Linux consortium, it will integrate the full Open Source Development Lab (OSDL) Carrier Grade Linux (CGL) 1.1 feature set for UnitedLinux 1.0, delivering enhanced abilities to develop and deploy advanced carrier-grade applications in a standardized Linux environment. Developed by UnitedLinux integration partner SuSE Linux with HP, IBM and Intel, the features enable telecommunications providers to develop and deploy new products and services on standards-based, modular communications platforms.

For the full press release, see: http://www.unitedlinux.com/en/press/pr011603.html

For a third party article on this press release, see: http://news.com.com/2100-1001-980949.html?tag=fd_top

Dissolutions and Withdrawals

HomeRF Working Group Disbands

CNET News.com, January 7, 2003 - The rivalry among wireless network standards was officially narrowed to two principal players (Bluetooth and the family of Wi-Fi standards) with the announcement that the HomeRF Working Group, formed to promote a home networking specification, would be disbanded. At one time, the specification - which can carry voice as well as data - was hoped by its proponents to be the first standard to be embodied in commercially available products. However, support for the standard eroded when Intel shifted its allegiance to Wi-Fi, and other companies followed suit. The formal disbanding of the group acknowledges what had already become apparent - that HomeRF was not destined to become an influential specification in the marketplace.

For the full news story, see: http://news.com.com/2100-1039-979611.html?tag=cd_mh

Certification and Branding

Wi-Fi "Hot Spot" Seal of Approval Program Launched to Identify Compliant Sites

CNET News.com, January 9, 2003 - In a move to allow laptop owners with wireless cards to know when they can and can't expect a satisfactory user experience, the Wi-Fi Alliance has launched a "Wi-Fi Zone" certification program. Only sites which use 100% certified Wi-Fi compliant products, provide minimum 128 kbps connection speeds, and which enable users of Virtual Private Networks to connect will be able to display a seal of approval assuring users of what to expect. Further conditions include the ability to remain connected to the Web at least 95% of the time, and provision of on-site or 1-800 telphonic support. The program will facilitate the anticipated burgeoning of the 4,000 commercial "hot spots" which already exist.

For the complete story, see: http://news.com.com/2100-1033-979959.html