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Consortium Standards Bulletin

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THE ROLE OF THE W3C

News Cluster: 30 Days in the Life of the World Wide Web Consortium

Which consortium supports "universal access, the semantic Web, trust, interoperability, evolvability, decentralization, and cooler multimedia" -- and has more than 30 Working Groups busy doing just that?

Updates: RFID Tags on the March/Lobbyists square off over European Software Standards

Will these tags be everywhere in no time? Or, like solar cells, will they always seem to be just over the horizon, waiting for production costs to drop? And what about those nagging privacy concerns? Promotion and privacy fixes are in the news. Meanwhile, the lobbyists are doing battle in Europe over whether or not software should be patentable.

The Rest of the News: Plug and Play comes to the Network; Standards seek to Consign Cable Set-top Boxes to the Ash Heap of History; Oracle promises new Grid Computing Consortium; Wal-Mart throws its weight behind EDI-INT; IBM and Eclipse Woo Sun; U.S. wants to help Iraq restore its standards infrastructure; and much more.

Featured Event: OSGi Alliance World Congress

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SEPTEMBER NEWS CLUSTER:

A MONTH IN THE LIFE OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB CONSORTIUM

Andrew Updegrove

Most people would agree that the World Wide Web Consortium (or the W3C, as it is universally referred to) is the organization by which all other consortia are measured. Despite earning such respect, it is not likely that anyone will ever precisely emulate it, due to its novel structure, varied work product and diverse interests. For example, while it has chosen not to pursue formal accreditation as an SDO (it refers to itself as an "international industry consortium"), it has all of the positive process attributes that people commonly associate with such a body. And while it is funded through significant corporate dues, it is hosted by three non-profits (the MIT Laboratory for Computer Science in the US, the European Research Consortium for Informatics and Mathematics, headquartered in France, and Keio University in Japan).

What does it create? Go to its site, and you will find specifications, guidelines, software and tools. Who does it serve? While it has 450 member organizations that pay the bills, it also welcomes public participation and views itself as a custodian of a critical global resource. And finally: what is its mission? "W3C supports universal access, the semantic Web, trust, interoperability, evolvability, decentralization, and cooler multimedia."

Got all that? All in all, a different sort of standard setting entity. Herewith, a brief profile of some of its more important attributes:

- **Globally Representative:** Unlike national standards bodies and many consortia that purport to be international (but in fact draw most of their membership from a single country -- often the United States), it is not only hosted in three countries, but also conducts many of its meetings in diverse locations around the world.
- **Stable:** Unlike most consortia, it has a significant budget, dedicated staff, and a nine-year history.
- **Capable:** The W3C has a team of over 60 researchers and engineers working around the world on W3C projects, exclusive of the myriad employees of member companies that are similarly engaged on a full or part-time basis.
- **Productive:** Since its formation, the W3C has advanced over 40 standards to "Recommended" status; many more are in process in more than 30 active Working Groups.
- **Respected:** It is acknowledged to have a process that is highly effective in creating non-proprietary, quality standards. It also maintains liaison relationships with 33 different international consortia and SDOs, in order to maximize the efficiency and utility of standards of diverse kinds.
- **Principled:** As demonstrated by its three-year, marathon effort to wrestle a patent policy to the ground that would permit the Web to remain royalty free, it has remained dedicated to fulfill the mission that it was created to achieve.
- **Vision:** More like an open-source project in this respect than either an SDO or a consortium, it has a leader who is acknowledged to be the father of its domain area, and who continues to envision new dimensions for that domain.
- **Socially Conscious:** Unlike most consortia, it includes aspects of social responsibility in many facets of its operations, seeking to make the World Wide Web truly World Wide in its utility and accessibility.
- **Egalitarian:** Like an SDO, a consortium and an open-source project all rolled into one, it accepts the views of anyone -- individuals as well as companies, open-source zealots as well as corporate strategists.

All of which is not to say that the W3C has not had periods in the past where some found it to be less effective than it is today, or that everyone shares Tim Berners-Lee's current vision of a semantic web. Or that its rather dry website may not surprise first-time visitors (it more closely resembles the "engineers only" web presence of its more low-profile cousin, the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) than the

virtual front door of most standards body sites). And finally, it is hardly immune from the commercial machinations of its own members, who (rightly) recognize the enormous commercial value that will arise from standards-based commercial opportunities, such as the advent of Web-based services.

Be all of that as it may, it is always both interesting and necessary to pay close attention to what the W3C is up to. Sometimes it is easy to miss the important news that emanates from the organization, simply because there is so much activity that proceeds in so open and step-wise a fashion. W3C has a multi-stage technical development process, which includes public comment periods and releases of pre-commercial specifications for testing in the field. Even at the end of this process, rather than sounding the trumpets and announcing a "standard," the W3C issues a "Recommendation."

All of this process is announced by means of releases and web pages (with abstracts), the language of which smacks more of a technical journal than classic public relations jargon. As a result of the large number of initiatives that are under way at any one time is a continuous stream of updates as numerous work projects progress through the various stages of the W3C process, morphing their way from ideas to final, implementable work product.

Because of this steady stream of status checks, we have decided in this issue to present a sampling of just some of the announcements issued by the W3C in the last 30 days, in order to give some insight into this unique organization – a month in the life of the World Wide Web Consortium.

During the 30 days ending September 12, 2003 (in other words, while most people were finishing up their vacations, celebrating the last holiday weekend of the summer, and getting their children back to school), the W3C made 14 announcements, covering a wide variety of topics. Nine of those announcements reported on the advancement or release of 20 different technical process drafts, while one related to the release of completed work product (Amaya 8.1, a Web browser and authoring tool available in binary and source code form). Others reported on upcoming appearances by W3C staff at conferences and meetings, invited participation in a survey to determine the future course of a discontinued project (Libwww, a free, highly modular client side Web API written in C for Unix and Windows) and calling a meeting to discuss the fall-out from a crucial patent case impacting the Web.

All in a month's work at the W3C. Here, in greater detail, are some of the more interesting announcements issued by this most interesting of standards organization.

Ontology and OWL: Tim Berners-Lee's vision of the "Semantic Web" is not the easiest construct for a layperson to understand. And even among those that do comprehend the concept are those that find it to be an unfortunate diversion for the W3C. Like so many visions that are scoffed at, however, this one is beginning to coalesce and become real (or virtually real, anyway). The following article focuses on the advancement of "OWL," an ontology language and a crucial component of the Semantic Web, to "Candidate Recommendation" status by the W3C. CR status, the near-final stage in the multi-step process that permits a W3C specification to morph from concept to final "Recommended" status, means that the specification is regarded as being "essentially stable" and ready for implementation. The following article describes this latest development.

The Semantic Web is Closer Than You Think **By Kendall Grant Clark**

XML.com - August 20, 2003 -- Last year I wrote an article for XML.com, ["If Ontology, Then Knowledge: Catching Up With WebOnt,"](#) in which I introduced the W3C's web ontology language effort to the XML developer community. As a result of a long journey filled with hard work, the W3C's web ontology language, now called OWL, was advanced to W3C Candidate Recommendation on 19 August. While there is a lot of talk these days about the Semantic Web being the crack-addled pipe dream of a few academic naifs, in reality it's a lot closer to realization than you might be thinking. Now I want to be clear about this point: I'm not suggesting that we stand on the brink of a fully achieved, widespread Semantic Web. I am suggesting that some of the major pieces of the puzzle are now or will soon be in place. OWL, along with RDF, upon which it builds, are two such very major pieces of the Semantic Web puzzle.....[Full Story](#)

For full W3C information on OWL, see: <http://www.w3.org/TR/owl-features/>

For an overview and an array of supporting bibliographic and other helpful links, see: <http://xml.coverpages.org/ni2003-08-19-a.html>



Why the W3C is Different: *While many US-based consortia purport to be global, few have made the degree of commitment to act accordingly that the W3C has demonstrated. Similarly, its technical agenda is expressly committed to maintaining equal access to the Web for all throughout the globe. As such, the W3C represents an interesting evolutionary hybrid: a consortium that acts like an accredited standards development organization when it comes to achieving consensus -- but which also sets its own course rather than seeking accreditation. The following announcement by the W3C illustrates how its socially conscious agenda affects its technical program.*

Character Model for the World Wide Web 1.0 W3C Internationalization Working Group (I18N WG), Working Draft

W3C, August 20, 2003 --The goal of this document is to facilitate use of the Web by all people, regardless of their language, script, writing system, and cultural conventions, in accordance with the W3C goal of universal access. One basic prerequisite to achieve this goal is to be able to transmit and process the characters used around the world in a well-defined and well-understood way. Topics addressed include character encoding identification, early uniform normalization, string identity matching, string indexing, and URI conventions. Some introductory material on characters and character encoding is also provided.....[Full Story](#)

For an extensive library of linked documents on Markup and Multilingualism, see:
<http://xml.coverpages.org/multilingual.html>



What did you say? *Although specifications get implemented in bits and bytes, those who set them still need to interact verbally. As a result, there is the potential for standards groups working in the same technical neighborhood to talk past each other, resulting in confusion at this most traditional of all levels of communication. To address this situation, the W3C has gone to the top of the standards stack to release a glossary of words relevant to the work of its Device Independence Working Group.*

Glossary of Terms for Device Independence

W3C, August 25, 2003 -- This first public working draft provides a glossary of terms used in other documents produced by the W3C Device Independence Working Group (DIWG). The World Wide Web is the universe of network-accessible information. The Web is becoming accessible from a wide range of devices including cellular phones, TV, digital cameras, and in-car computers. Dedicated to ensuring that the Web universe is not fragmented, the W3C Device Independence Activity is working to ensure seamless Web access with all kinds of devices, and worldwide standards for the benefit of Web users and content providers alike.....[Full Story](#)



Now what? *One role of consortia that is often not appreciated is their ability to provide a forum for the discussion of how to deal with patent assertions that threaten the ability to implement standards. Recently, Microsoft suffered an expensive defeat in a patent suit brought against it by a company called Eolus (see "A Disturbance in the Force" under The Rest of the News/Intellectual Property, later in this issue). In the face of that most feared of all bugaboos -- a patent that could entitle its owner to level a tax on the Web -- the W3C released a report, issued an invitation to its members and others to discuss the situation, and set up an archived mailing list to permit the dialogue to continue.*

W3C Holds Ad Hoc Meeting on Recent Court Decision, Launches Public Discussion List

W3C, August 28, 2003: W3C invited its Members as well as other key commercial and open source software interests to attend an ad hoc meeting hosted by Macromedia on Tuesday 19 August in San Francisco, CA, USA. Participants discussed Eolas v. Microsoft and US Patent 5,838,906. W3C has created the public-web-plugins@w3.org archived public mailing list for discussion. Please [refer](#) to the report from Steven R Bratt, W3C Chief Operating Officer.



Somebody's got to think about this: While the typical electronic device consumer may not realize it when she turns off her PC, leaves her desk and switches on her PDA to access the same webpage, authoring the content at that page such that it displays properly represents a technical challenge. Even less obviously, accessing the same page via a LAN instead of a cable modem presents additional technical issues. With connectivity expectations and options becoming ever more diverse, the W3C has turned its attention to making web content authoring independent of the device that accesses that content.

Device Independence Working Group Notes Published

W3C, September 1, 2003 -- The Device Independence Working Group completed work on two Working Drafts and has published them as W3C Working Group Notes. "Device Independence Principles" describes Web access "anytime and anyhow" from user, authoring and delivery perspectives. "Authoring Challenges for Device Independence" are considerations and implications for building universally accessible Web content and applications. Visit the [W3C Device Independence](#) home page.

For extensive background, references and annotation, see: <http://xml.coverpages.org/ni2003-09-02-a.html>



Quick: How many years ago was the Web invented? Although it may be hard to believe, note bene the numerical designation of the next International World Wide Web Conference, to be held in New York City, and co-sponsored by the W3C. WWW2004 is hoping to attract original research papers on topics such as Search, Security and Privacy, Mobility and Wireless Access, Data Mining, and TB-L's own favorite topic, the Semantic Web.

WWW2004: The Thirteenth International World Wide Web Conference

The CoverPages, September 5, 2003 -- A Call for Participation has been issued in connection with The Thirteenth International World Wide Web Conference (WWW2004), to be held May 17-22, 2004 in New York. The technical program will include refereed paper presentations, alternate track presentations, plenary sessions, panels, and poster sessions. The main three-day conference is preceded by two days of special topical tracks, tutorials, and workshops; a Developers Day follows.....[Full Story](#)

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STORY UPDATES

No more lines (or privacy?) For the last several issues, we have been including news on the bleeding edge of adoption of radio frequency identification (RFID) tags. Some see these tiny transmitters on a chip as the ultimate tool for inventory tracking and end-to-end supply chain management, while others see a threat to privacy. Our guess is that they will eventually be ubiquitous (unless they are leapfrogged by some new, yet-to-be-released technology), with the greater question being how soon prices and antenna sizes both reduce to the point where the broad incorporation of RFID tags becomes inevitable. The first two articles below report on efforts being launched in Las Vegas and Chicago to familiarize the marketplace with the joys of RFID, both within and without the four walls of commercial establishments, while the third article focuses on efforts to quell the fears of those who feel that there are enough eyes looking over their shoulders already.

SAP to show off RFID's Potential by Stacy Cowley

IDG News Service, September 5, 2003 -- When SAP AG's TechEd gathering kicks off next week in Las Vegas, it will lack one of the traditional trade-show trappings: The conference's attendee badges will be bar-code free. SAP has declared TechEd an RFID zone... By showcasing the technology at TechEd, SAP hopes to prompt developers to consider RFID's potential uses. SAP will include RFID tags in attendees' badges. On the show floor, vendor booths will feature receiver antennae that can record the contact information of booth visitors, without the usual badge-scanning routine. Kiosks in the exhibit hall will allow visitors to stroll up and check their personal show schedules, which will be automatically detected through the RFID tags and displayed.....[Full Story](#)

Chicago Show Heralds "Internet of things" by Paul Roberts

InfoWorld, September 15, 2003 -- In 1893, the World's Columbian Exposition brought millions of visitors to Chicago to celebrate the achievements and promise of the industrial age. One hundred ten years later, a symposium in the same city will highlight technology that may fuel the next 50 years of economic growth: a global network of intelligent objects. The EPC (Electronic Product Code) Executive Symposium will run from Monday Sept. 15 through Wednesday, Sept. 17 and marks the official launch of the Electronic Product Code (EPC) Network, an open technology infrastructure developed by researchers worldwide. The network uses RFID (Radio Frequency ID) tags to enable machines to sense man-made objects anywhere in the world, effectively creating an "Internet of things," according to Kevin Ashton, executive director of the Auto-ID Center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, which is hosting the show.....[Full Story](#)

RSA Seeks to Fix RFID Worries

eWeek, August 25, 2003--Researchers at RSA Security Inc.'s lab have come up with a technique they said will eliminate many of the privacy concerns surrounding the use of RFID tags and enable enterprises and consumers to use the technology without worry. The solution involves fooling RFID (radio frequency identification) readers into believing all possible tags are present at any given time; it is an inexpensive, elegant answer to a number of the privacy and security questions being asked about RFID technology, security experts say. RFID tags are being used in a quickly expanding array of industrial and corporate applications, most notably inventory control and tracking and security and access control. ...[Full Story](#)



Battle of the lobbyists: In a previous issue, we reported on the growing opposition to pending legislation in Europe that would permit United States-style patenting of software and business methods. Since then, the opposition has become more disciplined and united, with more lobbyists and fewer "pony-tailed computer geeks" countering the formidable forces of the multinational computer and software companies that favor the bill. Trapped in the middle is the somewhat bewildered European Parliament, which is more used to debating the evils of genetically altered vegetables than the virtues of open source over patented, proprietary software.

E.U. software patent opponents turn up lobbying

By Paul Meller

IDG News Service, September 11, 2003 -- Opponents of a proposed European law on software patents have overhauled their lobbying efforts in a last ditch attempt to turn lawmakers' opinions in their favor. Next Wednesday the Green Party in the European Parliament, which agrees with opponents such as the open source and free software communities, will host a conference on the draft law which is scheduled to be voted on at the next plenary session of the European Parliament towards the end of this month.....[Full Story](#)

THE REST OF THE NEWS

New Consortia

Another type of grid in the news: *Grid computing has been getting quite a bit of press over the last several months. This distributed architecture offers not only the potential to network vast numbers of computers to assemble awesome computing power from lower priced components, but also permits sharing of storage, applications and data as well. By its nature, such a system would benefit from standards, and its hardly surprising that the rising level of interest in this area is spawning its first commercial consortium*

Oracle plots grid computing consortium

By Matt Hines

CNET News.com, September 11, 2003 -- Database-software maker Oracle is building a consortium of industry players to help create standards for commercial use of grid computing, an Oracle executive said Wednesday. Addressing the crowd gathered at this week's OracleWorld conference in San Francisco, Chuck Rozwat, executive vice president for database server technologies at Oracle, said the new organization would help generate guidelines for businesses hoping to tap into the promise of grid computing.....[Full Story](#)



Dell calls for blade server standards

By Ina Fried and Michael Kanellos

CNET News.com, September 8, 2003 -- "There should be a common blade architecture," CEO Michael Dell said in a keynote speech at the OracleWorld trade show here. "If we are successful, and I am reasonably optimistic we will be...I think you will see a high-volume market for these blades." However, Dell said the transition from traditional servers to blades will not happen overnight. "I think it is going to take awhile," he said... Getting a Dell-sponsored blade initiative off the ground, though, could be tough. IBM and Intel have already formed an alliance to standardize the construction of blade servers.[Full Story](#)



New Standards

Standards come of age. *There has always been a deep divide between interoperably **intolerant** and interoperably **tolerant** (albeit grudgingly) systems. The former include systems such as telecommunications networks, where either you connect, or you don't. The latter, regrettably, includes your office computer network, where its accepted that you will need to underwrite an expensive IT department to assemble and maintain that network. Slowly, the gap between these two extremes is starting to narrow, as standards groups develop ways for network components to identify and configure themselves, much as PCs and their peripherals (mostly) do today. In the following article, **Cover Pages** reports on a new initiative by the **Universal Plug and Play Forum** to tame the network.*

UPnP Forum Releases New Security Specifications for Industry Review

Cover Pages, August 22, 2003 -- The Universal Plug and Play Forum (UPnP) Security Working Committee has issued a call for industry review of two new XML-based specifications, SecurityConsole: Service Template Specification and DeviceSecurity: Service Template Specification. The working committee invites comments on these level 0.93 specifications, particularly with regard to the robustness of the proposed security solution and to potential security vulnerabilities. The UPnP Forum seeks to develop standards for describing device protocols and XML-based device schemas for the purpose of enabling device-to-device interoperability in a scalable networked environment.[Full Story](#)



Last step: Another consortium with a multi-step process akin to that of W3C is OASIS, but with an added twist: a committee can adopt A new specification and stop there, or it can be adopted by the full membership. Several new standards recently received full member-adopted status, as announced by OASIS at its website.

SAML v1.1, WSRP v1.0, and XCBF v1.1 Approved by the OASIS Membership at-large as OASIS Standards.

OASIS, September 2, 2003 - Members of the OASIS Security Services TC, OASIS Web Services for Remote Portlets TC, and OASIS XML Common Biometric Format TC are to be congratulated on their work in developing these specifications. Thanks also to all OASIS members who reviewed the specifications and cast ballots.



Musical Chairs, anyone? While the SCO suit against IBM and SCO's threats of action against the end-user community have dominated the news, realignments and reactions of note to these developments have also taken place.

Turbolinux Joins OSDL

Internetnews.com, August 27, 2003 Japanese Linux firm Turbolinux, a founder of the UnitedLinux group and provider of one of the most widely-used Linux distributions in Asia, Wednesday added its support to the Open Source Development Labs (OSDL) consortium. OSDL is a non-profit consortium of IT industry leaders dedicated to furthering the growth and adoption of Linux in the enterprise. The addition of Turbolinux -- which helped drive the development of double-byte character support for Linux -- to its member companies strengthens OSDL's bid to become one of the guiding bodies behind the development of enterprise Linux, adding expertise in the Japanese and Asian markets. ...[Full Story](#)



Advocacy

Where were you when the standards went out? As you might expect, there are standards that address various aspects of power transmission, including reliability. Like most standards, these are created through the voluntary consensus process and, unlike government regulations, cannot be enforced by those that create them. The following article from the ANSI site explores the question of whether this should change, in light of the massive August blackout.

Voluntary Utility Standards Face Post-Blackout Scrutiny

ANSI, New York August 19, 2003 "Reliability" is becoming the catchword of the public after the worst blackout in U.S. history spread over 9,300 square miles on August 14, 2003. Over the last several days, utility officials and politicians have pointed to various sources as to where the problem began. As scrutiny descends on the nation's power grid and indeed the entire energy infrastructure, an ANSI member has been on the front lines of a barrage of questions, attempting to answer the "why" and "how." The North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) says it needs more authority to enforce the standards the guide the utilities market. ...[Full Story](#)



Certification and Branding

Consumer Fault Intolerance: Another interoperability "fault intolerant" area of technology is consumer products: for commodity electronic items like television sets, purchasers are slow to purchase items that do not offer pure plug and play performance. Now, new standards provide the ability to bypass the need for set-top cable-access boxes (and thus avoid the headaches related to those devices). CableLabs, the research and development consortium where such standards are developed, has seized on this opportunity to make life easier for consumers. Not surprisingly, vendors have been quick not only to implement, but to gain certification of compliance to these new standards as well. The following press release announces the latest product line to clear certification.

Panasonic Notches Digital Milestone: Four Models Of Integrated Digital Television Sets Achieve CableLabs® OpenCable™ Certified Status

Louisville, Colorado, August 14, 2003 – The cable industry achieved a digital video milestone when CableLabs announced that it had awarded certified status to Panasonic for four models of integrated digital television sets (DTVs) that will connect directly to cable television systems and receive digital services without requiring set-top boxes. The announcement followed completion of a wave of certification testing conducted as part of the CableLabs OpenCable project. Panasonic's four certified DTVs will be able to directly receive High Definition (HDTV) and other one-way digital programs via cable, including premium services, on cable systems throughout the United States without the need for a set-top box....CableLabs Certified™ means that the device has passed a series of tests for compliance with the indicated version of the specification and has thus demonstrated interoperability with multiple cable distribution networks. Founded in 1988 by members of the cable television industry, Cable Television Laboratories is a non-profit research and development consortium that is dedicated to pursuing new cable telecommunications technologies and to helping its cable operator members integrate those advancements into their business objectives. Cable operators from around the world are members. CableLabs maintains web sites at <http://www.cablelabs.com>; <http://www.packetcable.com>; <http://www.cablemodem.com>; <http://www.cablenet.org>; and <http://www.opencable.com>.



Miscellaneous

Another British Invasion? While US mobile phone owners continue to be largely oblivious to text messaging, use in countries such as Great Britain continues to grow exponentially. With the offering of additional services designed to wed owners ever more tightly to their cell phones (such as popular polls and voting), the adoption of text messaging in the US may be even more rapid once the craze begins to take serious hold.

MOBILE DATA ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES 1.6 BILLION MESSAGES SENT DURING JULY 2003

The Mobile Data Association, August 28, 2003 The MDA today announced that the total number of chargeable person-to-person text messages sent across the four UK GSM networks in July 2003 totaled 1.68 billion, compared to 1.3 billion in July 2002 and 992 million in July 2001....Over the last four years

text.it (<http://www.text.it>) has witnessed text messaging grow from a popular craze to becoming an essential communication tool..."Text messaging is continuing to rise in popularity and diversity," comments Mike Short, Chairman of the MDA. "As well as person to person text messaging we are seeing an increase in interactive text with programmes such as Fame Academy and Pop Idol providing people with the opportunity to vote via a short code across all networks." ...[Full Story](#)



More standards pull from Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart's on-again/off-again love affair with Radio Frequency Identity (RFID) Tags isn't the only news that its making in the standards world. This month, we highlight another article from CNET, which reports on a new vendor requirement (effective in October) announced by Wal-Mart. This time, the retailer is seeking to facilitate the electronic exchange of "paperwork" using Electronic Data Interchange-Internet Integration, or EDI-INT, a protocol for moving data across the Internet that incorporates Extensible Markup Language (XML). Two aspects of this news are worthy of comment. The first, upon which the article focuses, demonstrates the profound economic impact that IT decisions made by the largest companies can have -- in this case, on the software marketplace, which will reap tens (if not hundreds) of millions of dollars in sales from vendor purchases motivated by the need to meet the new Wal-Mart requirement. The second aspect, however, is subtler: the ability of a single company to guarantee the broad utilization of a standard, as a result of its market power. Most standards initially struggle for acceptance, while companies haggle over the exact form of the specification and assess whether they will gain or lose from the uptake of the standard in its final form. But in a situation like this, the adoption by a single company with vast purchasing power can guarantee the broad use of a standard. It is at this point that the two aspects of the story touch: given the investment that multiple vendors will need to make in standards-compliant software to meet the requirements of this single customer, they will have a strong economic incentive to support its utilization by all of their customers. In this dynamic, we see the same result, in a more benign way, that results from the imposition of a proprietary, de facto standard from a vendor. But instead of a push from the top of the supply chain to the advantage of a single vendor, we see a pull from the opposite end, motivated simply by Wal-Mart's desire to use the most effective standard available to facilitate its operations and boost its profits. The result should be the rapid uptake of a standard to the ultimate benefit of all retailers that choose to follow in the wake of the retail giant.

Wal-Mart project boon for software makers

CNET News.com, August 14, 2003 -- Black & Decker and drugmaker Abbott Laboratories are among a handful of major companies that this week said they have purchased and installed special software to help meet new requirements for doing business with Wal-Mart, the world's largest retail chain, with more than 4,700 stores around the globe. The software is designed to shuttle a daily flow of electronic purchase orders, invoices and shipping notices between companies by using the Internet rather than private networks...Although Wal-Mart declined to specify the dollar value of the various projects, one analyst estimated Wal-Mart suppliers are collectively spending tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions, of dollars on software to comply...Specifically, many Wal-Mart suppliers must be equipped to exchange paperwork electronically using Electronic Data Interchange-Internet Integration, or EDI-INT, a protocol for moving data across the Internet that incorporates Extensible Markup Language (XML). ...[Full Story](#)



Bombs, Lights and Standards: Rebuilding the critical infrastructure of an entire country has many challenging aspects. The fact that the U.S. Department of Commerce placed the re-establishment of the Iraqi standards system on its action list literally before all of the lights were back on in Baghdad is another indication of the essential role that standards play in society.

Need for Testing and Certification Services in Iraq

ANSI, Washington, DC August 8, 2003 The U.S. Department of Commerce (DoC) is seeking organizations interested in providing testing and certification services in Iraq. Mr. Susan Hamrock, a DoC employee in Baghdad, has been assigned to help the Iraqis re-establish the Central Organization for

Standardization and Quality Control (COSQC). The COSQC has primary responsibility for ensuring standards for goods, both domestic and imported, are met. ...[Full Story](#)



What's Up/What's Down

What's in a Name? When IBM helped found Eclipse.Org two years ago, playing the dominant role seemed like a good idea -- good enough to invest \$40 million in, as a matter of fact. Now that the project has made progress in creating its open source, single graphical interface "framework" for development, however, IBM has decided that its time to take a step backwards. How big a step? Big enough that the open source organization hopes to convince IBM arch-rival Sun Microsystems (which promotes NetBeans, its own open source tool initiative) to join the party, and help stabilize the Java community by building a path of interoperability between the Eclipse and the NetBeans code. If the organization really wants to let Sun shine in, though, word has it that Eclipse's perhaps too-clever name will have to go - interoperability bridges aren't built on efforts to Eclipse the Sun initiative.

Eclipse revamp to forge path for Sun By Martin LaMonica

CNET News.com, September 3, 2003 -- Skip McGaughey, chairman of Eclipse and an IBM executive, said the organization is revamping its membership model to gain independence from IBM, which invested \$40 million in seed funding to start the open-source tools project. By freeing itself from IBM's sponsorship, Eclipse hopes to attract other Java supporters--namely Sun Microsystems--that have been wary of joining a forum dominated by Big Blue. The changes will take place over the next three months, McGaughey said. For the full press release, see: http://www.etsi.org/pressroom/Previous/2003/2003_10_lpra1.htm



Standards in the World

Teleworkers of the World, Unite! Not so very long ago, working at home involved reliance on the "sneaker net," and if you tucked the wrong floppy disk in your pocket, well, you might as well head back to the office -- or just take the night off. With the advent of wide area networking, serious home office use became more technically feasible, but it was still frustrating and expensive, not to mention limited by slow telephone line modem speeds. Today, through the interplay of diverse internet, cable, modem, wireless and other standards, it is possible to work from virtually anywhere, any time, at a low cost. Of course, this means that you can't take the night off anymore, and blame it on grabbing the wrong floppy disk

HOME-BASED TELEWORK BY U.S. EMPLOYEES GROWS NEARLY 40% SINCE 2001

BALTIMORE – Sept. 4, 2003 – Today ITAC, the association for advancing work from anywhere, revealed significant increases in home-based telework in the United States, as uncovered by the 2003 American Interactive Consumer Survey conducted by the Dieringer Research Group...According to the survey, the number of employed Americans who work from home during business hours at least one day per month has increased by nearly 40 percent since 2001; for the self-employed, the equivalent increase is almost 18 percent. The report also found that 42 percent of the employee teleworkers work from home at least one day per week, and 22 percent of the employees work at home daily or nearly every day.



Was that a cell phone I heard? One reason that standards have a higher profile today is because standards-enabled consumer products have become so ubiquitous and noticeable. Today, there are well over one billion mobile phone users - a fantastic number by any measure. In the following press release, the GSM Association, which promotes the interests of operators offering services based on GSM, GPRS (General Packet Radio Services), EDGE (Enhanced Data for GSM Evolution) and 3GSM wireless

communications platforms, announces the arrival of its 200th member: Djibouti. Other recent arrivals include the Bahamas, Kiribati, Comoros, Guatemala, Timor Leste, Honduras, and Guyana. The reach and breadth of the GSM membership also underlines the way that standards-enabled technology can help emerging countries avoid capital intensive infrastructural investments (in this case, to enable wire-line transmission of voice and data) to bring first world services to third world countries.

GSM Celebrates 200 Country Milestone

London, UK: 2nd September 2003: The GSM community celebrated another milestone in August as membership of the GSM Association (GSMA) broke through the 200-country barrier. The Association – the global trade organisation for GSM operators – now numbers some 592 operator members in 203 countries with more than 909 million customers worldwide. New countries joining the GSM community recently include the Bahamas, Kiribati, Comoros, Guatemala, Djibouti (the 200th country), and Timor Leste (the 201st), Honduras (202) and Guyana (203). 99.7% of the world's population lives in countries that have selected GSM. ...Full Story



Intellectual Property

A disturbance in the force: One of the truly remarkable things about the World Wide Web is that it has avoided running aground on blocking (or almost as seriously) royalty-bearing patents directly affecting Web users. Recently, a verdict was handed down in a long running-patent suit involving the technology underlying Web-page embedded applets. The damages -- as well as the implications -- of this verdict caught everyone's attention. Now the industry is trying to unravel the implications of the decision for vendors and end-users alike. Meanwhile, if the verdict stands, even industry-giant Microsoft will feel the impact of the \$512 million award on its legendarily enormous cash balances.

Microsoft's Patent Loss Rattles Tech Community **By Paul Roberts**

IDG News Service, September 3, 2003 -- Companies with products that work on the Internet are slowly waking up to the broad implications of a recent judgment against software behemoth Microsoft Corp. in a patent infringement case. The \$520 million award to Eolas Technologies Inc. of Chicago and the University of California (UC) stemmed from a 1999 lawsuit in which Eolas and UC charged Microsoft with infringing on a 1998 patent owned by the university and licensed to Eolas. However, the verdict could spell trouble for a wide range of popular Web-based products and services, experts agree. ..In response to the judgment against it, Microsoft said last week that it will be making changes to Internet Explorer (IE) that may affect a "large number of existing Web pages," according to a statement by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

FEATURED EVENT

October 21 -24, 2003 OSGi Alliance World Congress

The World Congress of the OSGi Alliance will be held this year in Dusseldorf, Germany. A one-day workshop will precede the three day World Congress.

For the full program, see: http://www.osgiworldcongress.com/agenda_main.asp

To register, see: <http://inventures.com/authorize/events/registration/start.asp?id=56>

About OSGi Alliance: <http://www.osgi.org/about/>

THE CONSORTIUM STANDARDS JOURNAL WANTS YOU!

In our last issue, we announced that we planned to bifurcate the Consortium Standards Bulletin into two e-Publications: the monthly CSB would carry timely news, while a new electronic offering, the Consortium Standards Journal, would carry on the work of providing more serious commentary and analysis.

We are currently preparing the first issue of the CSJ, and we'd like to invite you to contribute to this or a future issue. If you have works of original authorship, previously unpublished, we would be happy to consider them. Submitted work should ideally be accessible to a non-technical audience, and must be of interest to the standard setting community. Welcome topics include economic and social effects, intellectual property issues, best practices, government policy and governance.

If you would like to discuss a possible article or submit finished work, please contact Andrew Updegrave, updegrave@lgu.com, 617/350-6800.

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